

PLAY



The UK's independent PlayStation magazine

ISSUE NO **196**
PLAY IS
DUTY
BOUND

revealed

Batman Returns

First details on Arkham City

news

Street Fighter X Tekken

Clash of the classics

**KILLER
EXCLUSIVE**

CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS

- World's first multiplayer hands-on
- Unrestricted developer access
- Maps and weapons revealed



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INFINITE**

The steampunk series makes a rapturous return

new tech
**SMART
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Sony's new motion controller and Move games reviewed

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**KANE &
LYNCH 2**

We endure the Dog Days in this Shanghai sequel



Enjoy Your Stay

October 22 2010



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Fallout
NEW VEGAS

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PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

Doing our duty



Call Of Duty, a game that has achieved what so few games have managed – to breakthrough the thick cloud of mainstream indifference and establish itself as a true entertainment mainstay. Of course, celebrity endorsement, Hollywood-style premieres and unfeasibly huge sales haven't done its reputation any harm, but while the man on the street probably couldn't

While the *Modern Warfare* series is hailed as the pinnacle of multiplayer action, Treyarch, developer of *Black Ops* – the latest *COD* iteration – is more than capable of delivering an experience equal to Infinity Ward's efforts and with this game Treyarch is looking to better even that. With an exclusive first play of the multiplayer modes we can say that that aim is tantalisingly close to realisation. So turn to our exhaustive feature on page 44 to find out how *Black Ops* will allow your weathered copy of *MW2* to take a well-earned break.

While talking of new additions to popular franchises we've also been spending some serious game time with this year's most exciting updates: *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow*, *Fallout: New Vegas* and *The Force Unleashed II* are just a few of the sequels featured in this issue. We deliver reviews of the follow-ups to *Kane & Lynch* and *Mafia* – so an issue for sequels, for sure, but (as with **Play**) if the quality keeps improving with every new addition I don't mind a bit.

K. HENNESSEY Editor

Your weathered copy of Modern Warfare 2 can take a well-earned break

tell you what an *Uncharted* or a *BioShock* is they would certainly have some concept of *Call Of Duty*. Indeed, Activision's franchise has easily secured a place in gaming's hall of fame alongside the likes of *Grand Theft Auto*. However, unlike Rockstar's story-focused forays, *Call Of Duty* isn't often hailed for its narrative but for its addictive and unrivalled multiplayer experience.

contributors



Darran Jones

This month Darran became the coach of the Jamaican Winter Olympic bobsleigh team. Yes, can you believe it? Jamaica has a bobsleigh team. They practised on sand to a soundtrack of reggae while Darran shouted instructions. He quit after finding out that the winner gets a medal and not a Trophy. "I only done it 'cos I fought I'd get a Trowfee," he told the press.



Simon Miller

One time wrestling SuperStar, 'SuperMiller', has fallen on hard times, and is living in his van. His lucky break came recently when he was offered a rematch against his nemesis, 'The Mujtahid'. Before the big fight, though, he needs to sort out his relationships with his estranged daughter and local 'tart with a heart' stripper, Cassie.



Dan Peel

We don't know why we've put Dan in the Contributors panel this month, as he's barely contributed anything at all. Instead he's swanned off to get married in Poland before swanning off some more on honeymoon in... Poland also. His wife is Polish, in case you were wondering. She's the reason we sometimes call him Peelski, or even Grandmaster Peelski.

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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Cover image

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13-Issue subscription UK £51.90 / Europe £70 / ROW £80

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Printing & Distribution

Printed by Wyndeham Heron, The Bantall Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW

Distributed in the UK & Eire by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT
☎ 0207 429 4000

Distributed in Australia by Gordon & Gotch, Equinox Centre, 18 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086
☎ +61 2 9972 8800

Distributed in the Rest of the World by Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU
☎ 0203 148 8105

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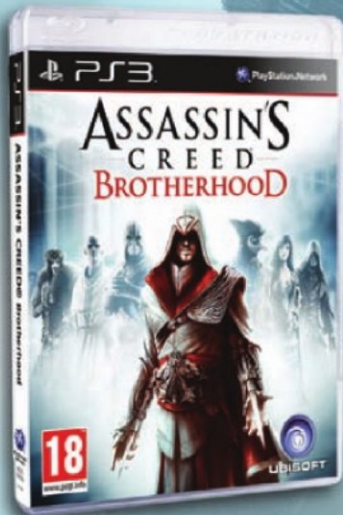
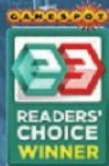
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ISSN 1358-9474



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UBISOFT

NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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"Move stuff is obviously a big thing that we're going to be adding immediately after the single-player is done" – Mark Healey, Media Molecule creative director, p.10

Heavy Rain has sold around 1.5 million copies since launch

TESTING THE WATER

Heavy Rain: Move Edition a testing ground for Quantic Dream's future Move support

In an exclusive interview with **Play** it has become clear that David Cage, CEO of Quantic Dream and director of *Heavy Rain*, still needs to be convinced of PlayStation Move's potential.

With a Move Edition of his videogame masterpiece due for release alongside the motion-control peripheral this month, Cage has stated that his team has been working hard to give hardcore gamers new challenges and offer easier settings for newcomers. He was unsure about whether he would concentrate on purely motion-controlled games in the future, though. "I don't believe that the device can work for all types of experiences," he told us. "I will also wait to see how the market will react to Move and especially to the hardcore games that are going to be released. If players enjoy the controller, we will of course consider developing

We were certainly not interested in making 'Heavy Rain Party Game.' We wanted to innovate with the gameplay

more content." And such content would be much easier for Quantic Dream to produce now the hard work of developing engines and programs has been done. "Our interfaces and technology are now fully compatible for both devices, so we can easily create experiences offering both options."

Interestingly Cage did, however, see PlayStation Move as a very good opportunity to bring *Heavy Rain* to people who are still intimidated by the PlayStation 3 pad. "We certainly wanted to make the game more accessible for some casual gamers for whom the DualShock is still a barrier to playing games," he said. "I always thought it was stupid to exclude people who could enjoy an experience

like *Heavy Rain* just because the interface is too complex for them."

But it wasn't all about the casual gamers. "We were certainly not interested in making 'Heavy Rain Party Game,'" Cage insisted. "We wanted to innovate with the gameplay and offer a real challenge for hardcore gamers. We wanted to see if it was possible to use this device for something other than family entertainment. I really believe that this type of device can work for both audiences and I am eager to see more mature games using them."

Motion-control tests for the game have actually been taking place since the beginning of the game's development according to David Cage, as even the Wii was considered. "We made the decision [to use motion control] in the first months of development," he explained. "After *Fahrenheit*, I wanted to go further in exploring the possibilities of creating mimicry between the player and the character on screen, and it seemed that motion control was an interesting option. I was

interested by the Wii-mote, of course, but I was curious to see if it was possible to go further and have a system that would be adapted to a more mature game."

From there Quantic Dream actually designed its own device to test with. "We decided to design a device using the EyeToy 2 and to submit it to Sony," revealed Cage. "The system was based on a 'kind of futuristic' plastic shape embedding each fist. It was quite *Minority Report*-esque, but it looked cool. We had discussions with Sony, but unfortunately the controller didn't come to light. So we forgot about it and refocused on implementing our interface on a DualShock controller."

word on the tweet



TheKevinButler

"Just once, I'd like to come into the office with my hair on fire like Sweet Tooth from *Twisted Metal* and play it like it was no big deal."

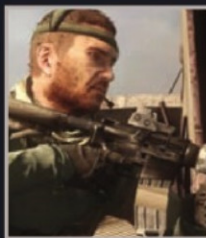
PlayStation VP Kevin Butler is clearly pumped for *Twisted Metal*

Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



GT Special Edition Confirmed

Sony has announced a Signature Edition of its upcoming racer *Gran Turismo Sport* for Europe. This special edition, launching November, includes the game, model car, key ring, USB stick, art book, leather wallet and Apex magazine. That will all add up to €179.99 (approx £150).



You Got FIFA In My Medal Of Honor

EA has revealed that animation technology developed for the *FIFA* series is being used in its *Medal Of Honor* reboot. The ANT engine handles player running animations and was used in games such as *FIFA 10*. It will now be used in *MOH* for NPC animation.



Another Half-Minute

PSP hit *Half-Minute Hero* is getting a sequel, it has been announced. Developer Marvelous Entertainment is focusing in more on the RPG challenges for the sequel, which it plans to release in Japan this November. We'll be keeping our fingers crossed for a UK release in 2011.

⦿ "It was important for us to find the right balance between intense physical actions and calmer moments. Not all players want to jump on their couch for ten hours... We keep the intense fast-paced sequences for the action sequences, and I think they are very fun to play."

⦿ "I thought fans would really enjoy these episodes because they explained many aspects of *Heavy Rain* and why characters are who they are. Unfortunately, Sony preferred to ask us to focus on Move to support the device rather than on creating new content."

⦿ "Time will tell if these devices have a future beyond party games, but also if publishers are prepared to innovate with content and not just copycat the Wii."

⊗ "It was very important not to make a cheap conversion of the original game, but really to try to use the device as much as we could, not as a gadget, but really to support immersion."

Really Worth The Effort?



Fans would have gotten more from the prequel episodes than Move, thinks Jon Gordon



WHEN RUMOURS BEGAN to circulate that the *Heavy Rain Chronicles* prequel DLC was being put on hold, I was understandably disappointed. However, hearing from the horse's mouth (no offence Mr Cage) that the episodic

content was being canned because Quantic Dream couldn't make both the DLC and Move Edition of its game was even more devastating.

Motion control and this gesture-heavy game should make perfect sense, but after so many months was it really worth going back again with this new control setup? Cage himself seemed hesitant about Move and its short-term success, adopting a firm 'wait and see' approach. In particular, it would seem from our interview that Cage wasn't elated by the idea of dropping *Heavy Rain's* prequel content in favour of Move control. My concern now is whether this Move Edition will really be up to scratch and just how much this could end up harming Sony's relationship with the independent French developer.

Having said that Quantic Dream has embraced motion control, even attempting to develop its own tech and *Heavy Rain* already made great use of the Sixaxis controller. Ultimately, I'm happy enough with the original *Heavy Rain* and would have welcomed the new DLC that could have kept the experience going for a short time more. I think it's a great shame that we'll probably never get the chance to see what Cage and co had in store for us.

SKYSHOCK

2K reveals BioShock: Infinite

KEN LEVINE, THE original creative director of *BioShock* has returned to the world he created with his upcoming game *BioShock: Infinite*. However, this is nothing like the game you know. This time, the sky's the limit.



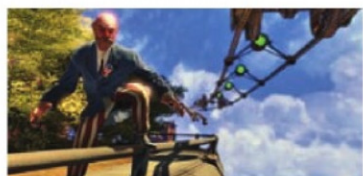
Before The Plunge

BioShock: Infinite takes place in the floating city of Columbia, somewhere over the US in the year 1912. It predates *BioShock*, but it is not intended to be seen as a prequel according to Levine.



What Price Freedom?

Much like Rapture, Columbia is gripped by political fanatics and the citizens are passionately patriotic. An unspecified international incident involving the city sets the game in motion.



The G-Man

You will play as a former Pinkerton Agent (an early, privately owned version of the modern FBI) named Booker DeWitt, tasked with finding and 'rescuing' a woman named Elizabeth from Columbia.



A Friend Indeed

Elizabeth is more than just a damsel in distress. She'll accompany Booker through the game using her own abilities combined with his. This will take its toll on her, though, so don't overdo it.



Bigger And Better

Irrational Games is giving you an arsenal of abilities with a much greater destructive capability. Throw in the expansive city in the sky and it's clear *BioShock: Infinite* is going to be huge.

The possibilities for Move are still not apparent.

MORE TO MOVE THAN MEETS THE EYE

PlayStation Move creator says there's plenty more to come

We've only seen the very beginnings of what PlayStation Move can offer according to its creator and head of Sony Computer Entertainment R&D Dr Richard Marks. Thanks to the PlayStation Eye's inbuilt

"We're continuing to explore new ways to use the Move, but we're starting to look at new things as well," Marks revealed to us. "With Move we have the controller in your hand, the PlayStation Eye which we can do lots of video processing things with

Even without creating any new hardware there's a bunch of new stuff we can do with our existing system

capabilities, he believes we could see a great many more gameplay applications than those that have been revealed so far, which are similar to things we've already seen on the Nintendo Wii.

and the microphone array that's in the PlayStation Eye, we can do voice input things with it and so even without creating any new hardware for a long time there's a whole bunch of new stuff we can do with our existing system."

As it is, Marks told us that the PlayStation Move had been designed with a number of

core gaming styles firmly in mind to make sure it would actually work with a broad range of games. The great thing about Move, though, according to Marks, is that while it can clearly work on existing videogame types it also has the scope to go further. "We had a whole bunch of experiences that we wanted to be able to create and Move was partially built to allow people to create those experiences," he admitted. "We also felt that by having a really powerful 3D input device that is very fast and very precise, it would create a whole set of experiences we hadn't thought of yet. There are some things we knew we wanted to make and everyday we're now thinking of new things to do with it."

word on the tweet

evan_wells
"Shinji Mikami stopped by Naughty Dog today. Thanks for the visit!"
Naughty Dog's Evan Wells evidently enjoys his time spent with *Resident Evil* and *Vanquish* creator Shinji Mikami.



Move DLC for LBP2?

LittleBigPlanet 2 may be updated for Move functionality

Despite having seen tests of the PlayStation Move controller working with *LittleBigPlanet*, creative director Mark Healey revealed to us that motion control may not be available out of the box on release. Media Molecule is currently very busy pulling together the final build of *LBP2*, which it also revealed to *Play* was fully playable from beginning to end.

We asked Healey whether Media Molecule would continue to offer content DLC rather than levels. "We're going to be

doing even more of that," he assured us, before explaining what we could expect post-release. "I think we've already sorted – whether or not it's DLC exactly – that the Move stuff is obviously a big thing that we're going to be adding."

As it stands *LittleBigPlanet 2* seems to be taking advantage of every little thing that the PS3 is capable of doing from motion control to video making and content sharing. "That's the idea," agreed Healey, before joking, "Maybe it's too awesome."



REASONS WHY...

You should care about DC Universe Online



IT'S GOT ART TALENT Sony hasn't messed around in putting together a dev team for DCU. SOE Austin has hired a number of DC artists, most notably industry legend Jim Lee, who is executive creative director.



CHOOSE YOUR ALLEGIANCE You won't play as any of the established characters; you'll have to make your own and choose if you want to be good or bad. This will give you access to either Justice League or Legion of Doom missions.



IT'S GOT DEVELOPER TALENT It's worth knowing that SOE Austin was responsible for *Star Wars Galaxies*. That game suffered issues over the years, but SOE has learnt plenty of lessons from its development.



WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER The latest trailer suggests that while you may be choosing a good or evil path, you may ultimately end up having to join forces with the other side to defeat a greater threat.



IT'S GOT VOICE TALENT DCU isn't skimping on the audio, either. Kevin Conroy and Mark Hamill will be voicing Batman and The Joker as they did in *Arkham Asylum*. Adam Baldwin voices Superman.



QUESTION?

What is Mega Man Universe?

IT'S A MYSTERY wrapped inside a riddle inside an enigma. Or perhaps it's something obvious. Whatever it is, Capcom is keeping its cards close to its chest, but here's what we know so far...

In the real world

The teaser trailer shows a young boy's bedroom seemingly turned into a playground for Mega Man to fight his classic enemies in while the boy sleeps. Could this hint at a *Mega Man* set in the real world?



Play as anyone

The trailer didn't really reveal a great deal, but it did hint at the idea that you could play as a number of different Mega Man series or Capcom characters such as Ryu or Sir Arthur from *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*.



Play as anything

Another clue offered in the trailer was that, near the end, Mega Man falls to his death and while in mid-air his limbs and head change to other characters' body parts. This could be hinting at a kind of 'build your own' *Mega Man* approach.



LittleMegaPlanet

All this talk of making your own Mega Man and Inafune's promise that you can make the Mega Man you identify with, whether that's from *Mega Man 2* or *Mega Man X*, is pointing towards a user-created platformer.



MMO (Mega Multiplayer Online)

Inafune said that he wanted to "unite Mega Man fans from around the planet to play together in one place". That sounds like shorthand for an MMO game, but how would that work in the *Mega Man* world?



ANSWER:

Likely a create-your-own platformer



No Relegation Fears For England

National team to retain standing in FIFA 11 says producer

Given England's performance at this year's World Cup, we expected to see its ranking in *FIFA 11* drop from five stars down to something more in keeping with this summer's display. However, *FIFA 11* producer David Rutter has spared England the axe by calling the team's most recent performances a blip. He didn't rule out cutting player's stats via Live Season update, however.

"At this point in time their performances as the England team has been judged on a

very disappointing tournament," Rutter told us. "We will continue to watch them and obviously we've had Live Season in the past and can adjust people's form based on that – so we'll see what happens."

Rutter believes the players will retain their form once they go back to their clubs. "I don't think that any of those players, if they were to return to the leagues and play in the positions they usually do, will be significantly less than they were last season based purely on the World Cup," he added.



RETRO MOVIES, MODERN GAMES

The films are old, the games not so much



Back To The Future

The time-travelling adventures of Marty McFly – via a flying DeLorean – are set to come to PS3 via Telltale Games and an episodic delivery method. If you're not excited, we don't like you.



Tron

This could be classed as a tie-in with a new film, but it doesn't follow the same story as the movie so we're allowed to claim it for this list. Disney's computer-world moves into the 21st Century.



Jurassic Park

The second film franchise receiving the Telltale Games touch is Spielberg's dino-movie. We're hoping for lots of running away and plenty of occasions in which we can say "clever girl".



Top Gun

We're still waiting on the *Hot Shots!* tie-in that really does deserve to be made, but instead we can make do with another *Top Gun* game. There's no word yet if there'll be a volleyball mini-game.



Ghostbusters

Granted, this came out a while back, but we can't think of anything else. In lieu of a third movie, the creators of the original films got together to make this semi-sequel, and grateful for it we were.



Killer Conundrum

Ubisoft struggled with idea of multiplayer Assassin's Creed

Speaking exclusively to *Play*, *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* associate producer Jean-Francois Boivin revealed that the Ubisoft Montreal team had struggled with the idea of bringing multiplayer to *Assassin's Creed*. Apparently several trips back to the drawing board were needed before the award-winning team could find a concept for the game that worked, but ultimately they fought on with it in order to give fans what they desired.

"[Multiplayer was] something that we didn't just want to slap on there," Boivin told us. "It would be a disservice to the universe and the licence." *Assassin's Creed*

had up to this point been a single-player only experience, but the idea of taking that world online and sharing it with friends was too attractive to just give up on. "It's very important to us to make something that makes sense, so it took us a few years to get a really solid design," he continued.

"We went to the drawing board a couple of times and it really had to be true to the universe and its pillars (social stealth, navigation and fighting)."

And as we've mentioned it was all for you guys, the fans. "For me the fans are who I work for," Boivin explained. "If they don't like what I do and they don't engage in what I do, then it becomes a one man show. It really has become, from the very beginning, a great

The fans are who I work for... The way we share ideas is what makes a good portion of this universe very special

relationship with the fans and community and the way we share ideas is what makes a good portion of this universe very special."

YOUR SAY Digital Decisions What do you want from PSN games?

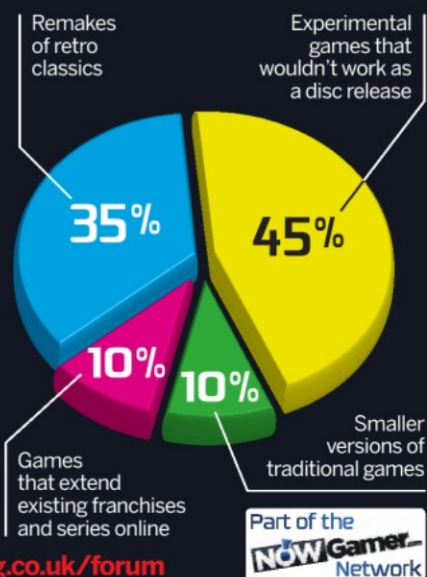
AS WE MOVE out of the summer-long gaming lull we can expect PSN games to become a little more low-key again. This summer has seen some excellent releases (*Shank*, *DeathSpank*, *Joe Danger*), but what sort of games get your attention on the PlayStation Store?

"Remakes of old retro games always make me happy, and updates of old franchises too, like the upcoming *Sonic 4 Episode 1*. I tend to use PSN for DLC, free stuff and demos... Occasionally I have bought full games like *COD1* and *Mushroom Wars*, but I don't play them that much" – **the bossman**

"Well I bought *Flower* and with my manhood lost it was a terrible game. It was just boring; yes the music was relaxing but that still doesn't save it from the repetitive gameplay" – **skrudge7**

"I thought *Flower* was a really good game, and if you are looking for good games off the PlayStation Store, I'd recommend the *PixelJunk* series, *Shatter*, *Comet Crash*, *Supersonic-Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars*, *Savage Moon*, *WipEout HD*, *Lemmings*" – **UberCool_UberGoff**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose

GRAN TURISMO 5

Publisher Sony • Developer Polyphony Digital
ETA November

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Apparently, Kazunori Yamauchi had to fight for *Gran Turismo* to be made at Polyphony, making *Motor Toon Grand Prix* before convincing his colleagues.

TOP OF THE POPS

Polyphony has been teasing something special regarding the *Top Gear* Test Track. There has been much speculation as to how the team will handle the fact that the track crosses over itself. Could collisions be possible?

IT'S IN THE DETAILS

One fact to prove how far Polyphony goes for accuracy is that, thanks to a temperature simulation, tyre smoke is only created when they reach the correct heat. Keep the tyres cool and no smoke should appear.

STANDARD OF LIVING

The other 800 or so cars are considered Standard cars, which have the same level of detail on the exterior, but not for the interior.

LARGE GARAGE

GT5 will feature over 1,000 cars, which is the most the series has ever managed to muster. By comparison, Microsoft's *Forza Motorsport 3* managed only a little over 400. Some of these cars will be very special indeed.

PREMIUM CONTENT

Over 200 of the cars in *GT5* will be Premium cars featuring highly detailed interiors and exteriors right down to the fabrics on the seats and the wheel nuts.

ARE YOU READY?

Yamauchi boasted in 2009 that he could release *Gran Turismo 5* any time he wanted, but warned it would not be complete if he did.

A LONG TIME COMING

Development of the latest *Gran Turismo* has been going on around six years, with the full team at Polyphony starting work on it in 2004. *GT4* was of course released in Japan in December of that year.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

How to make PSN fill us with glee... SN

1 Up the beta count

Demos are all well and good, as are trial versions (also known as 'demos'), but we'd like to see things upped on the beta stakes. The *Medal Of Honor* beta has reminded us how much fun we can have repeating the same level ad nauseam.

minis

2 Move Minis

Minis with Move functionality would serve two purposes: one, to allow for more 'experimental' titles to be released; two, to help avoid shovelware clogging up shelves in game shops. It's a win-win situation, no doubt.

3 No subs, please

Rumblings about that *Call Of Duty* will be getting itself subscription charges for online players some time in the future. We see the thinking behind it and we even know people who would be willing to pay it – but *come on*.

4 Privates

An educational title aiming to teach us all about the dangers of STIs, made by an independent developer in league with Channel 4. Oh, but we want it because, from what we've seen, it's really, really funny and delightfully rude.



5 Convince us PS+ is great

We're not long into its life, but PlayStation Plus is still raising more questions than it answers. How long will it be before the service shows its hand and convinces us it's essential? Will that ever happen?

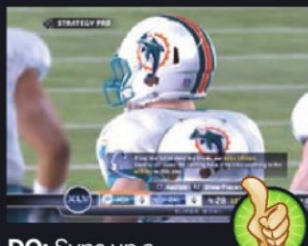
WWTS news:

We're seeing slow improvements to PSN, as we requested with the PS+ 'tax' last month. Make it even better, Sony.



DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month



DO: Sync up a headset to your PS3 before playing *Madden NFL 11*. You can find out why in our review on page 88.



DON'T: Waggle too hard with the waggle stick. It's bad for your wrist. Plus, the PlayStation Eye can't always see it.



DO: Consider getting driving lessons before starting *Mafia II*. You don't want to be committing amateur driving violations in that game.



DON'T: Dismiss Move and, in particular, *Sports Champions*. Sony has put together a fun and involving set of challenges.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 83



There are many different aspects to *Majin's* gameplay, from stealth and fighting to puzzle solving and exploration.

Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom

Q&A

Namco Bandai producer Karine Balichard talks to us about making *Majin* a game for everyone and offering a change from the shooter-heavy console world

We understand that *Majin* is a reaction to there being so many shooters and zombie games on consoles. Was it as simple as that?

At the very beginning, yeah. The team was surprised that the only games that seem to make it on next-gen consoles were shooters and racing games and fighting games. They had this great concept that came up about five years ago, but at the time they didn't know if they wanted to develop it on next-gen consoles. Maybe it would have been easier to develop it for the Wii because it seems easier to touch a larger audience on that platform. However, that was not the kind of game we wanted to make. We wanted to make a game for core gamers and it's definitely not a game for kids, so we had to bring it to the PS3 and Xbox 360 and offer something different to those gamers.

Was the Majin the turning point in terms of coming up with gameplay?

Of course it's a mix of many ideas, but the key element of the game was really the relationship between the main characters and how that evolves.

Were there any particular influences on the design of the Majin?

There were many inspirations behind the Majin, with maybe 100 versions, but in the end we had three types. We tried the first one, which was cute like a teddy bear, but it felt too childish and didn't fit the atmosphere we wanted to create. Then we tried a second version, which was a little more realistic, more brutal, a huge ogre essentially, but this was not really fitting either. So, we tried a third pass at it with this current design, which was the best, but we had hundreds before that.

He still has a very comic and loveable side to him, though. Was that the key thing you were looking for?

He's quite goofy. He's a bit clumsy and a bit dumb as well. Then as he begins to remember a lot of things and as he gets more involved in this kingdom's history you begin to feel that he's much more than that. He's more than a dumb bear; he's much more complex than that.

Would you say that the focus on nature in *Majin* is also a reaction to the more industrial-feeling games of this generation?

This is not the main idea behind the game, but you still have the Majin against this force of darkness and he's here to clean the world of this darkness. So there's a kind of ecological message there. It's not really a major theme, but it's still there.

Is the hardest thing simply balancing and pacing all these different gameplay ideas?



Yes. It's not easy and we're still working out how to tune all these aspects. In the end we're trying to create a good

He's more than a dumb bear; he's much more complex than that

mix between the stealth phases and exploration, the puzzle solving and the fighting. We're trying to create an experience that will really fit all players and then it's up to the player to make their own experience. If you want to prioritise the fighting then you can just jump into every battle and kill as many enemies as you wish. If you're more into exploration you can spend more time on that. On our side we're really trying to create a well-balanced mix between all those aspects.

And presumably it all has to tie back into this relationship between the thief (Tepeu) and the Majin?

Exactly. Every part of the game is made for both of them. They are both central for the game and for the story of the kingdom. You soon realise that you can't just think as Tepeu only; you always have to make sure of what the Majin is doing.

Lastly, we love the Majin, but do you have any plans to make a toy of him that we can have on our desks?

Yeah, I'd love to. I hope our marketing teams will do something like that.

STAT ATTACK
350,000 people played Madden 10 online only once and never again



We're hoping for a set of *Majin*-based toys to decorate our desks with.



Above Average Joe

Expect more of the same from Joe Danger developer

Hello Games is committed to making more colourful, fun and breathless games in the future after the success of its first title, *Joe Danger*. Speaking exclusively to **Play**, Hello Games' MD Sean Murray explained that making games like *Joe Danger* was the whole reason for setting up his team in the first place and he sees no reason to change that plan.

"The official Hello Games manifesto is to make games that put a big smile on your face; games that are entirely and unashamedly about having as much fun as possible," he explained. "That means different things to different people, but we're trying to create games that we ourselves love. We want our games to be bright, fun and accessible, but as hardcore gamers we know there has to be depth in there

The official Hello Games manifesto is to make games that put a big smile on your face

to really stretch your skills. We hope that's how people find *Joe Danger*, and is definitely the direction we are headed in the future."



Joe Danger has proven a huge success on PSN.

And what of that future? You may already know that *Joe Danger* came about after an Evel Knievel stunt toy grabbed their attention.

Perhaps other games could emerge from that play time.

"We're always having crazy discussions on new stuff, too," Murray admitted. "We have a load of ideas... that keep bubbling up in conversation whenever



our minds wander. We often lose a morning excitedly chatting about a new feature. I think we have some really exciting and different ideas in there, and I hope we get the chance to make them." And hopefully we'll get to see them exclusively on PSN again, too.

PLAY TEAM TROPHIES

Things the Play team has achieved this month



PLATINUM: IAN
Scored the greatest goal of his footballing career during Imagine's summer party. Both teams spontaneously burst into applause.



GOLD: GAVIN
Remembered his passport in a moment of unprecedented clarity and actually managed to get to the *Black Ops* multiplayer event in LA.



SILVER: JON
Managed eight interviews in four hours during his visit to Ninja Theory. The developer was thoroughly grilled by the time he left.



BRONZE: DAN
Left the rest of the team in the lurch to selfishly get married. While this should be a negative, we needed to work without his safety net.

Move Perfect RTS Fit

R.U.S.E. producer hails simple and accurate PS3 controller

Move and the RTS are a perfect fit according to Mathieu Girard, senior producer on Ubisoft's upcoming strategy game *R.U.S.E.*. Eugen Systems has been developing *R.U.S.E.* for some time with lots of new technologies being integrated into it with each passing year, but PlayStation Move was an easy and satisfying leap for the team to make.

"When we discovered the Move was coming we were intrigued," Girard told us. "We tried it, and I have to say that after about five weeks we managed to implement and polish a version [of *R.U.S.E.*] with Move."

The RTS genre has always struggled to find its footing on consoles, but Girard believes Move offers a solution. "I would



word on the tweet

davidscottjaffe
"On SKYPE directing Sweet Tooth VO 4 the end movies. He's in SF, Sony peeps are in LA, I'm in San Diego at my house. Ain't technology grand?"
David Jaffe is clearly using every moment he can to make his new game.

say it gives you the best alternative to a mouse and keyboard or a pad," he explained. "You can point very accurately, so it's natural and simple, and we were very surprised by [its] low memory and performance footprint."

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

	1	Red Dead Redemption Rockstar Another month and, yeah, you guessed it, <i>Red Dead</i> is top of the charts yet again. 92%
	2	Mafia II 2K Moving straight to number two is no mean feat, but <i>Mafia II</i> couldn't topple <i>Red Dead</i> . 81%
	3	Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days Square Enix Another new entry that's done well is <i>K&L2</i> . Shame it wasn't the full experience we hoped for. 71%
	4	Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Activision No, you cannot have a chart without a <i>Call Of Duty</i> game. We won't allow it and neither will <i>MW2</i> . 94%
	5	2010 FIFA World Cup EA Anticipation levels are rising now that the Premier League season has begun. Bring on <i>FIFA 11</i> . 70%
	6	God Of War III Sony Would Greece's debt issues have been solved if Sony had donated <i>GOWIII</i> 's profits? 88%
	7	Singularity Activision Raven continues a streak of solid releases here that went way above our low expectations. 80%
	8	Toy Story 3 Disney Superb results at both box office and dev studio make <i>Toy Story 3</i> the perfect movie-game. 82%
	9	Madden NFL 11 EA So starved for sports games is the public that it resorted to buying this pretty good American export. 84%
	10	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 EA EA is bemoaning poor sales of <i>Tiger 11</i> , but it remains a strong chart contender. 60%

PSP CHART

	1	Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker Konami Big Boss still rules the PSP roost this month, but his luck may begin to run out in the coming months. 92%
	2	Toy Story 3 Disney Movie tie-ins always seem to perform well on PSP, and <i>Toy Story 3</i> continues that trend. NA%
	3	2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA Clinging on for dear life still. When will this World Cup madness ever end? Never, you say. 65%
	4	LittleBigPlanet Sony Sackboy overhauls the young pretender of Tag and the <i>ModNation</i> crew to stay where he was. 90%
	5	ModNation Racers Sony The Play, Create, Share love continues to shine down on <i>ModNation Racers</i> in all its wondrous forms. 70%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

A dramatic, low-key photograph of a soldier in military fatigues, holding a rifle. The soldier's face is partially obscured by shadows. In the foreground, two hands are visible, each holding a handgun. The left hand's gun has "SALLY #111" engraved on the slide. The overall tone is gritty and intense, with a greenish-blue light source in the background.

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WE WERE BLOWN AWAY."**

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



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activision.com

{The Vault}

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Dragon Age Morrigan Figure

£16.99 at Play.com

With a *Dragon Age* sequel on the way and Morrigan confirmed to appear regardless of what you may or may not have done, this figure will remain an important piece of *DA* history for at least a little longer.



Haunted Video Game T-Shirt

£14.99 at www.genkigear.co.uk

Sometimes games can be scary: *Dead Space*, *Resident Evil*, you name it. But nothing is scarier than an actual haunted videogame, except maybe a shirt depicting a haunted videogame. However, you wearing a shirt depicting a haunted videogame just becomes something cool.



LittleBigPlanet Soft Toy Voodoo

£8.99 at Play.com

One game that is currently not short of merchandising is *LittleBigPlanet*, and our favourite Sackboy tie-ins remain these cuddly numbers. There's nothing quite like snuggling up to Sackboy of an evening to relax us. Even this Voodoo number is quite calming.



Dante Play Arts Action Figure

£27.84 at Discountz.eu

Square Enix's range of videogame action figures is really quite something, so it's no surprise that the likes of Sega and Capcom are flocking to its doors to get their heroes moulded into delightful plastic forms. This new Dante figure, for instance, is one of the best we've seen.



Umbrella Corp Hoodie

£30 at www.nerdoh.co.uk

Straight out of Raccoon City comes this Umbrella Corporation hoodie inspired by *Resident Evil* series. It might not keep the mutants away but it sure will fight off the cold.



They Are BACK!

£18.84 at MySoti.com

Dead Rising 2 is lurching ever closer and it's got us in the zombie mood. Show some love for the undead with this simple, but excellent homage.



Jedi Invaders

£17.93 at MySoti.com

Star Wars shirts seem to be in endless supply, but the best ones are from MySoti, which is evidenced by how many times we've featured them.



M Bison Statue

\$329.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

Show your utter devotion to Shadaloo by getting the ultimate idol of worship. This 19-inch statue of M Bison from the *Street Fighter* series is actually a little terrifying and not the sort of thing we'd want anywhere near our beds at night. The bathroom, on the other hand, might be a good move.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 2 September and 29 September. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.



Batman: Arkham Asylum Series 02 Figures

\$64.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

This set of *Arkham Asylum*-inspired figures includes Zsasz, Bane, Poison Ivy and Batman in full armour. The previous set included Joker, Batman, Harley Quinn and Scarecrow. We like the Bane figure; that's value for money, if you ask us.



Auluxe Dew Mini HiFi System

£199 at Amazon.co.uk

Struggling for space but still want to add a little style and finesse to your home? The Auluxe Dew Mini HiFi system is just the ticket. Lightweight and presented in a fancy cube design, it's comprised of a subwoofer and two satellite speakers.



Scott Pilgrim Mug

£5.99 at Forbiddenplanet.co.uk

By now you will have hopefully not only seen *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World*, but also played the PSN game. This image of Scott and Ramona is taken from the game, but is being used as part of the movie merchandising.



Miyabi Collection Wrapping Case For PSP

¥4,500 at GeekStuff4U.com

The PSP is sturdy, which is something that we're thankful for when we drop it, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't give it some protection. That's doubly important if the protection also offers your PSP some funky Japanese-themed clothing to slip into.

Metal Gear Solid: Basilisk

£49.56 at Play-Asia.com

More Play Arts love from Square going out to Konami as the Basilisk Metal Gear from *Peace Walker* is lovingly re-created. We've already featured the excellent Naked Snake figure that belongs to the same series and is well worth checking out.



NWZ-A845 Walkman MP3 Player

£149.99 at Sony.co.uk

In some circles this is being talked about as the music lovers' MP3 player with its high-quality audio feedback and simple-to-use interface. It's super-thin and small with 16GB of memory and a 2.8-inch display. Basically, if you love your music and your Sony products this is the perfect mix.



HIGH FIVE

Five of the best... official stores



Capcom Store

shop.capcom.com

Capcom's US store is pretty cool, and what makes it extra special is that it ships everything (except games) internationally, so you should have no trouble getting that new fight stick.



Square Enix Shop

square-enix-shop.com/eu

With quite an assortment of *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest* and *Kingdom Hearts* merchandising available, the Square Enix UK shop is a pretty cool place to find collectables.



Valve Store

store.valvesoftware.com

Valve has been supporting its store for some time and there's all manner of T-shirts and posters here. You can also get a cuddly Companion Cube, which sold it for us, frankly.



Double Fine Shop

shop.doublefine.com

There aren't many independent developers that support their own store, but if it's Whispering Rock shirts or Eddie Riggs statues you want, the DF store has you covered.



Rockstar Warehouse

rockstargames.com/warehouse

This shop not only stocks all of Rockstar's games, but also offers things like *Red Dead Redemption* playing cards.

They do say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.



HUNTING MONSTER HUNTER

Japanese developers can't think of anything other than Capcom's juggernaut

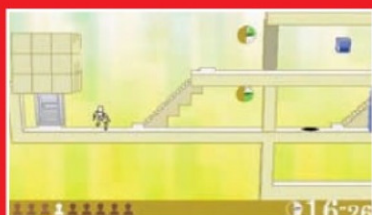
OUR MAN IN JAPAN

PlayStation pondering from the East

I've mentioned before in this column that *Monster Hunter* is big in Japan.

Let me reiterate, *Monster Hunter* is big. It's an unstoppable, gargantuan beholder that holds the entire Japanese gaming industry in its gaze.

Capcom just announced the newest 'Monhan' (Japanese slang for *Monster Hunter*) game for the true home of the series, the PSP. I'll get to that in a minute, but in order to really express how important the game is in the East I want to show you a short list of *Monster Hunter* clones that have been released since *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite*



Echochrome Echo

Music was a big part of *echochrome*, and the game's creators are even more ambitious this time. Producer Tatsuya Suzuki decided to live stream the recording session for *echochrome 2*'s only song on Ustream. That's right, the game only has one song. Spanning nearly an entire audio CD, the exact length of the song is a secret. When we asked why, we were told that the reason is secret, too. While you ponder Suzuki's answers, you can check out the recording session at www.ustream.tv/user/noisycroakBS.

came out a few years ago. You may look at these titles as triple-A, top-tier games, but most Japanese gamers consider them to be clones. They're the *Dante's Inferno* to *Monster Hunter's God Of War*.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

It may be the next best thing to *Metal Gear Solid 5*, but its co-op boss battles are straight out of *Monster Hunter*. Despite researching tech instead of grinding, and shooting guns instead of slashing with swords, *Peace Walker* was designed from top to bottom with Monhan fans in mind. The desire to capture that market is so strong that Kojima Productions never tried to pretend otherwise. After playing a demo of the game at last year's TGS, I pointed out the similarity between *MH* and Snake's PSP co-op shenanigans. The developer replied, "Yeah, *Monster Hunter* is huge. We're definitely gunning for it."

LOST PLANET 2

The rush to cash in on *Monster Hunter's* popularity is so strong that even Capcom is getting in on the act, making a clone of its own game. It may look better and control differently, but the core game is about the same thing: taking down giant monsters with three of your friends.

LORD OF ARCANA

Recently announced by Square Enix, this game is one of the most unabashed attempts to lure Japanese gamers away from Capcom's mega hit. Just look at the breakdown: PSP? Check. Four-player



Japanese PSP owners will soon be able to play a demo of the latest *MH*-alike *Lord Of Arcana*.

co-op? Check. Hunting monsters? Check. A free demo of the game is coming to Japanese PSPs in August.

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 3

Even the next PSP *Monster Hunter* game (I told you we'd get to it) is derivative. It's heavily based on the Wii's *Monster Hunter Tri*, but jettisons the less popular additions that game made to the Monhan formula, like the underwater sections. The game's 12 weapons are

mostly taken from previous games. To be fair, it's not like Japanese gamers want Capcom to reinvent the wheel. They're fine with refinement to a formula they like. *Monster Hunter* fans in Japan expect as much innovation as *Call Of Duty* fans expect with *Monster Hunter* – that is to say, not much.

The game will be released in Japan later this year. Players in the UK will probably have to wait until mid-2011 at the least.

Ogre Reboot

Not content with announcing just one game this month (the aforementioned *Lord Of Arcana*), Square Enix also announced a remake of the classic SNES strategy RPG, *Tactics Ogre*. Called *Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together*, the game will feature gameplay refinements to help it stand apart from its 16-bit forebear. However, judging by the screenshots, the graphics aren't getting the same level of overhaul.





AND FINALLY...

Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

JOSS A MINUTE

Bond girl gets the tabloid tongues wagging

THEY SAY: Joss Stone has been signed up to play the latest *Bond* girl in Activision and Bizarre Creation's original 007 game, *Blood Stone*. The West Country R&B singer (still can't get used to that combination) will play Nicole Hunter to Daniel Craig's Bond. She has been described as a femme fatale character. "I'm the first *Bond* girl from the West Country – instead of Martini in my glass I'm drinking cider and nobody will ever know," she told seemingly every tabloid paper in the country, before saying she has played Hunter as a "bit like a posh version of Paris Hilton."

WE SAY: Don't get us wrong, casting a soul singer who everyone had virtually forgotten existed must be a huge coup and everything, but frankly it strikes us as more incredible that Bizarre Creations is making a *Bond* game. That's the news story, but Activision put Stone's name up top so it knew what it wanted as the lead. Frankly, we're already concerned as for us the only important thing for a *Bond* girl to do (other than the obvious) is not be so annoying that we want to see her dead within five minutes of meeting her. A posh version of Paris Hilton? Yeah, she's as good as dead.

TOP SECRET!
BLOOD STONE
PREVIEW
PAGE 52

word on the tweet



TimOfLegend

"Even if you love someone, don't believe her when she says French fries dipped in water are delicious. Especially if she's two."

A mischievous child gets the better of *Brütal Legend* maker Tim Schafer.

ROCKSTAR REDEMPTION

Tabloid gets kicking after scandalous GTA story

THEY SAY: On 21 July the *Daily Star* ran a story on its website accusing Rockstar of developing a videogame adaptation of its *GTA* series based on the events of the Rothbury shootings and the eventual manhunt for Raoul Moat. After much outcry from the gaming community the story was pulled and three days later a lengthy apology was posted admitting it was false and revealing that "a substantial amount in damages" was being paid to Rockstar, which it in turn was giving to charity.

WE SAY: We spotted the original story and made our objections known to both the author and online editor without response. The author, Jerry Lawton, then went on his own offensive on Facebook saying he was, "Baffled by the fury of adult gamers [sic]." We actually found it more distasteful that he solicited responses from grieving family members for his supposed news story and that, as the *Daily Star* later admitted, "We made no attempt to check the accuracy of the story before publication and did not contact Rockstar Games prior to publishing the story." Oops.



Rothbury won't be the setting for the next *GTA* game.

stop please X



Virtual insanity

THEY SAY: Japanese women don't think they can compete with virtual girlfriends according to a recent survey. "There's no way I can beat that level of cuteness," said one concerned respondent.

WE SAY: You've been warned women of Britain. Virtual girlfriends are after your men and there's nothing you can do against the cuteness.



In the rough

THEY SAY: Poor sales of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11* have been blamed by one analyst on the recent scandals regarding Tiger Woods' personal life. It is believed sales could be permanently affected.

WE SAY: With Wii game sales declining and a mediocre release this year, we think the 'scandals' have had a limited effect.



Butler copycats

THEY SAY: A New Zealand TV network has been caught copying Sony's US ad campaign featuring faux company spokesman Kevin Butler with a shot for shot and line for line re-creation of its own.

WE SAY: Butler responded personally by saying imitation was the highest form of flattery, but the ads were pulled anyway.

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Go to www.Play-Mag.co.uk for daily updates and features

Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

6 best games to play when you're ill



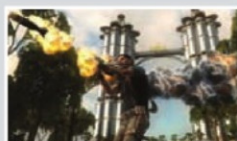
> FLOWER

A pretty obvious suggestion, really. What else do you want to do when you feel like rubbish apart from float around on the breeze, not really doing much? You might want to ignore the later levels when it gets darker and more threatening, though.



> FINAL FANTASY XIII

It's a hands-off experience – one you don't have to give your full attention and one that is simple to play for your illness-atrophied mind. You might be that delirious with your disease that you end up thinking the acting in the game is anything more than rubbish.



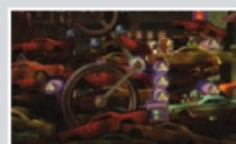
> JUST CAUSE 2

Avoid the combat as much as possible, as it can be quite hard if you're not feeling on top form. Get a plane delivered and just fly around in serene calm for minutes – nay, hours – on end. Then float around on a parachute. Ah, the healing powers of Rico Rodriguez.



> PEGGLE

We only suggest this for those of you that risk addiction by taking too much cold medicine when you feel under the weather. Counter addiction to medicinal drugs with a different addiction altogether: one of hitting pegs with a ball.



> LITTLEBIGPLANET

We all know suffering is a great catalyst for artistic expression. So why not use your illness to enrich the lives of others? Make a level in *LBP* that shows the world how you feel; how mistreated you feel as your body revolts against the viral or bacterial infection.



> UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Combine dumb action flicks with gaming and you come out with *Uncharted 2* – perfect for any ill gaming that you might want to partake in, so long as you turn the difficulty down.

<http://bit.ly/gxgEIZ>

5 Reasons To Love Scott Pilgrim Vs The World

1 GAMEPLAY The most important reason of all for you to love any game, and *Scott Pilgrim* is looking strong in this area. It's a classic arcade side-scrolling fighter with four-player co-op and ridiculous special moves.

2 GRAPHICS *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* is gorgeous. No, it's not *Uncharted 2* gorgeous, but if you love 16-bit arcade graphics then this game is the bomb. Just look at all that colour, and better yet is the animation.

3 MUSIC Not something that's given enough attention in our opinion, the music for *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* was composed by

a 'chiptune punk' band called Anamanaguchi. They use old consoles to produce their music, making it sound like classic videogame tunes.

4 RETRO GAME HOMAGE Much like the comic, *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* features plenty of references to classic games of yesteryear like *Street Fighter* and *Mario Kart*. There's more to come too.

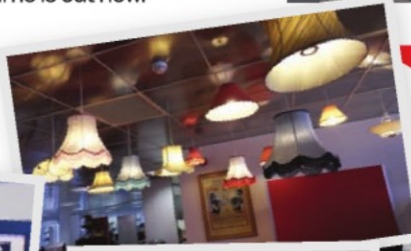
5 THE GRAPHIC NOVEL IS SUPERB It's always handy when the source material is actually good, and thankfully Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Scott Pilgrim* series has been amazing. The final volume is out now.



<http://bit.ly/chc4Rw>

Studio Visit Photos

A few shots from our visit to Seattle to see Sucker Punch.



<http://bit.ly/ccs3AP>
<http://bit.ly/csr6aI>



And a few more from our trip to Media Molecule.



Top 5 developers it'd be great to work for

> BLACK ROCK STUDIO

For starters, Black Rock is located by the seaside, in Brighton. We've never had a bad time in Brighton – that's a fact. But the main reason why Black Rock would be a good place to work is that there's a big bucket of Lego in the middle of the table in the main meeting room with a sign that says 'PLAY WITH ME'.

> GEARBOX SOFTWARE

There's really only one reason why Gearbox is an appealing place to make a living: the boss is a magician. Randy 'DuvalMagic' Pitchford used to perform at The Magic Castle in Hollywood. Now, he probably doesn't wander around the office pulling rabbits out of hats, but in our imagination he does.

> DOUBLE FINE

Another studio run by a genuinely funny guy, it's impossible to imagine having a bad day at work with

Tim Schafer as your boss. Although he did once claim that he motivates his staff by wandering among them with his shirt off.

> LUCASARTS

When you work for LucasArts you're given access to a huge database containing everything there is to know about every element of the *Star Wars* universe. This is frickin' awesome for a start, but what's even cooler is that if you're working on a new *Star Wars* game, you're adding to that database with everything you do.

> MEDIA MOLECULE

There isn't another developer in the world like Media Molecule. It's like a really high-tech playgroup on an endless 'make and do' session. Oh, what a happy life it must be.

STAT ATTACK
79.8%
the win percentage
of Notts County
online according
to FIFA 10



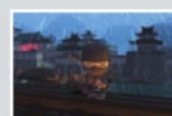
10 funniest games of the last year



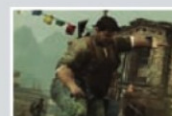
10 Bayonetta – Platinum Games' hack-and-slash-and-spank masterpiece is loaded with outrageous, surreal slapstick violence as well as sly references to numerous games.



9 ModNation Racers – *ModNation Racers* is full of tittersome cut-scenes and commentary, but the biggest laughs to be had usually come from what other players have created.



8 Mini Ninjas – This cartoony action-adventure surprised us with its quirky humour. If we had to choose a highlight, it would have to be the flatulent giant samurai battle.



7 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves – Probably the sharpest, wittiest and best-delivered script ever heard in a game, *Uncharted 2* manages to be funny without resorting to slapstick crudity.



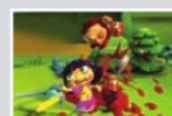
6 EyePet – The EyePet is a charming, funny character in its own right, but when you start abusing its innocence it gets hilarious. You can teach it to swear and draw inappropriate images.



5 Dead To Rights: Retribution – You can kill a man by biting his balls off. It's not the only funny thing about *DTR*, but it does stand as a beacon for the kind of humour we're dealing with.



4 3D Dot Game Heroes – Here's a game that's essentially built around a single visual joke, but it's a very funny, versatile joke. The character creator alone can provide endless amusement.



3 Fairytale Fights – It's not a very good game, but in small doses *FF* can be a hysterically funny one. Seeing Sleeping Beauty skidding around in huge puddles of blood is a hoot.



2 Brutal Legend – This game deftly extracts the humour of heavy metal music and culture without ever deriding it. And to those who disagree we say: "Silence, ground walker!"



1 Just Cause 2 – It's not the script that's funny in *Just Cause 2*. The reason *Just Cause 2* has made us laugh harder than any other game of the last 12 months is the violent and unpredictable slapstick that just naturally occurs again and again and again.

<http://bit.ly/cepidn>

<http://bit.ly/d70x04>

<http://bit.ly/bxkv93>

Dead Or Alive 5

10 things you can expect to see

10&9 HITOMI'S BREASTS

These breasts are slightly smaller and rather less showy than some of the other breasts in the *DOA* series, but they're still popular with those who value a little, but really only a little, more modesty.



8&7 CHRISTIE'S BREASTS

Christie is an assassin so her breasts are silent, deadly, ruthless and will kill anyone for money. Christie has silver hair and so likes to adorn her breasts in shiny bikini tops so that they match.



6&5 AYANE'S BREASTS

Ayane is also an assassin, so her breasts are silent, deadly and ruthless too, possibly more so than Christie's, given their size. Her target is her half-sister Kasumi, whose breasts are more popular.



4&3 KASUMI'S BREASTS

These breasts explode the myth that ninjas like to go unnoticed, as they make that impossible. They represent hope for ginger girls everywhere – if you've got a lovely pair no one will notice your hair.



2&1 TINA'S BREASTS

The undisputed #1 and #2 of all *Dead Or Alive*'s features. Tina is a wrestler – you only have to look at those breasts before you start choking, submitting and tapping out.



<http://bit.ly/awq2g>

5 great series that lost the plot

5 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

There hasn't been a worthy *Pro Evolution Soccer* game this generation and fans are only still buying it every year out of loyalty. The fans said it, not us. We asked them first.



4 MEDAL OF HONOR

Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun and *Medal Of Honor: European Assault* made it easy for Infinity Ward to turn the tables with *Call Of Duty*. However, with key personnel moving on from Infinity Ward this year, perhaps this should serve as a warning to Activision.



3 TOMB RAIDER

Okay, so it's true that there's only ever been one truly crap *Tomb Raider* game – *Angel Of Darkness*, of course – but even though better games would follow this release, the series never fully recovered. *Drake's Fortune* was the final nail.



2 TONY HAWK

The man himself never lost the plot and still remains a skating god, but his branded videogames? Ouch! They make you cringe more than seeing Tony Hawk bail off a loop ramp, flip backwards and smash the back of his head against the floor.



1 SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

The bigger they come, the harder they fall – this old adage was never more true in games than of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. In the Nineties, Sonic was a gaming icon, but for the last ten years he's hardly put a foot right.



<http://bit.ly/d70x04>

PLAY₃ Investigates

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Why is PSN becoming the new home of independent development in the games industry?

At the Develop Conference in Brighton this year, Sean Murray, the managing director of Hello Games and maker of *Joe Danger*, described Xbox Live Arcade as a 'slaughterhouse' for small developers. While his quote was taken somewhat out of context, the sentiment rang true. More and more independent developers with small but powerful ideas seem to be flocking to the PS3 and, in particular, to its Network service.

The first issue seems to be that there's a perceived market on the PSN that doesn't exist elsewhere. Games such as the *PixelJunk* series or *Flower* have shown that PS3 owners are excited by innovative ideas, and for a small development team that can be alluring. "Sony's approach to indies has turned out to be very welcoming and that is part of the reason why so many indies are choosing it as a platform," said Rudolf Kremers, creative director on upcoming PSN release *Eufhoria*. "Previous indie efforts, including some really original titles, have proven successful and found their

audience without problems, so that is very encouraging. I guess PSN players are happy to try out alternative game types."

While speaking at Develop, Murray threw some stats at us that explained just how hard it could be on Live Arcade by comparison. Self-published games on Live Arcade have a 47 per cent chance of selling less than 25,000 copies of their game. 23 per cent can expect to sell 100,000, 13 per cent 200,000 and 17 per cent more than 200,000. By comparison, *Joe Danger* reached 50,000 in its first week of sales and broke even on its first day of release. That's not to say that launching in PSN guarantees success, but it would seem indie developers are feeling more comfortable on that service and that's largely to do with the technology and support.

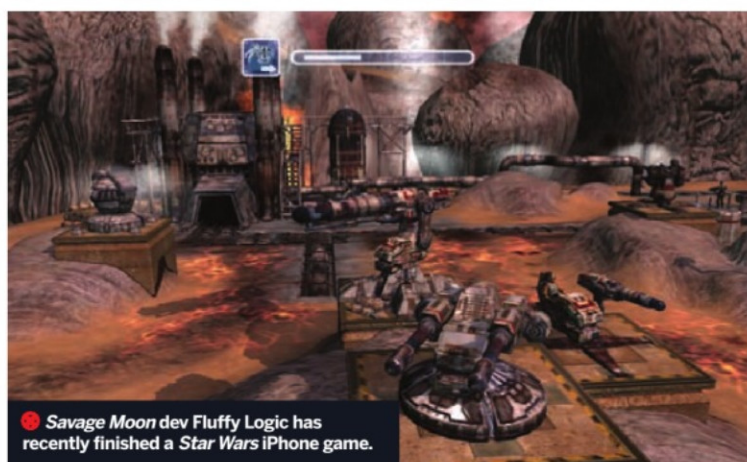
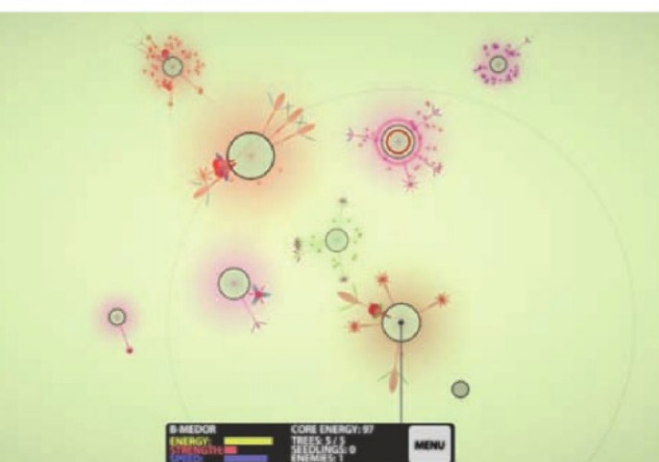
When we say technology we don't mean the pure grunt force of the PS3's processors. We're referring to the openness of the console and its online service that has finally attracted Valve to the PS3 and made *LittleBigPlanet* possible. Sony seems to be





Joe Danger's death animations are a particular highlight.

PixelJunk Shooter has been successful enough to warrant a sequel.



Savage Moon dev Fluffy Logic has recently finished a Star Wars iPhone game.

doing everything it can to support creative studios by giving them the room to express themselves and fulfil their vision.

"We spent a long time searching for a home for *Joe Danger*, talking to publishers and platform holders," Murray told **Play** prior to Develop. "Throughout it all Sony was always very supportive and co-operative. When you're small like we are, that helpful attitude means a lot. It's what attracts so many indie developers to PSN." Hello Games is incredibly small (it only has four team members), and yet it walked away with two Develop awards for best new studio and best micro studio.

"That PlayStation Network route was always the best fit for us," Murray continued. "We left our previous jobs at bigger developers so we could have the freedom to make the games we wanted.

Sony understands that freedom and is happy to give it. For instance, we're the publisher on *Joe Danger* – probably the world's smallest publisher – so we do everything from marketing and testing to getting the game localised. The PlayStation Network is the only platform that would allow us to do that."

It's a very powerful platform, and one that definitely demands talent from developers

It's a level of freedom that has also meant players could share content using *LBP* without having to submit every level for moderation before it could be seen, and the same freedom that is seeing Steamworks come with *Portal 2* next year. These may seem like small issues, but for a developer looking to use the

digital space, a hands-off approach can be liberating and that's what Sony seems to be doing with PSN.

Developing on PS3 is not easy, but as Murray insisted to us, that can sometimes bring out the creativity of the team. "Bringing our engine to PS3 was actually really fun," he said. "Coming from Criterion we have experience, so we were dying to get stuck in. It's a very powerful platform, and one that definitely demands talent from developers, but it's also very rewarding to work with."

Working with PS3 dev kits also has some upsides and downsides that you might not have expected. "The downside is that dev kits are massive!" he exclaimed. "Huge black monoliths that take up most of the leg space under our desks, though they do keep us warm through the winter."

PSN Indie Stars

The developers who have caught Play's eye on PSN



HELLO GAMES

As we've mentioned before, with only four team members this motley crew from Brighton managed to make one of the best games yet released on the PlayStation Network, *Joe Danger*.



CAPYBARA GAMES

Critter Crunch struggled early on, but perhaps furry creature-based puzzle games don't appeal to today's gamer. We don't have any more recent figures, but it should have turned things around.



Q-GAMES

Whose eye hasn't been caught by the *PixelJunk* series? Q-Games committed to produce a fixed number of games for the PSN, but with *PixelJunk Shooter 2* that commitment will be up.



FLUFFY LOGIC

This Bristol-based team considers itself to be more than just a games developer, but *Savage Moon* was a very impressive debut. We look forward to getting further servings some day.



THATGAMECOMPANY

Another developer with a fixed term on PSN, thatgamecompany's next title, *Journey*, is one of our most anticipated games for 2011 after what was achieved with *fIOW* and *Flower*.

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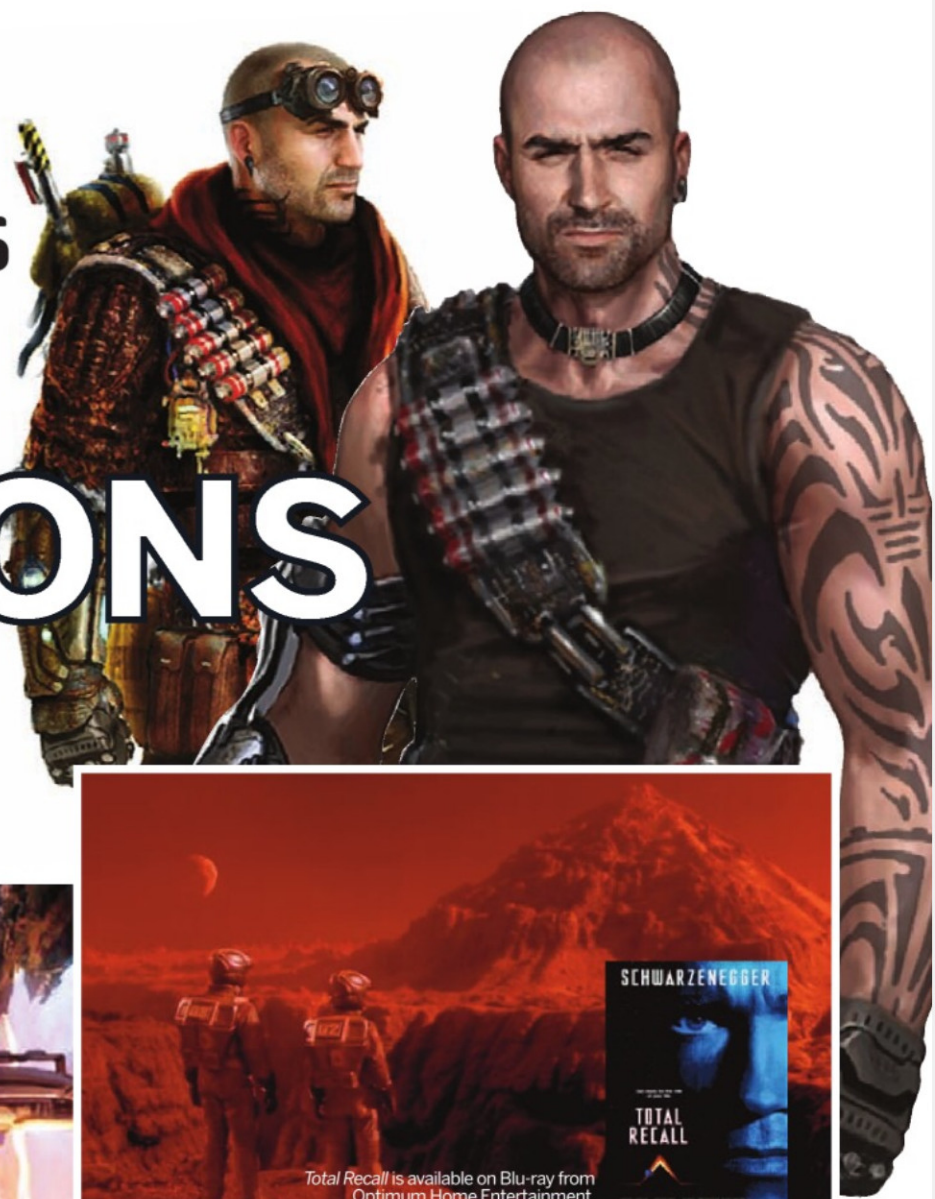
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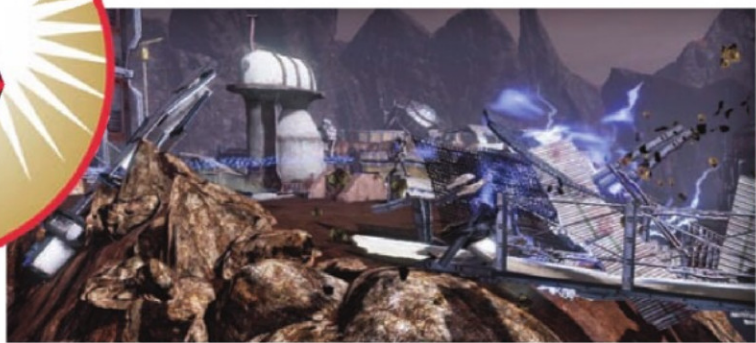
PLAY. 'S MARTIAN REVOLUTIONS

The Red Faction series is intrinsically linked to PlayStation – born and raised on the console. As such, we love the games like our own spawn and we just thought we'd tell it so...



Get your ass to Mars

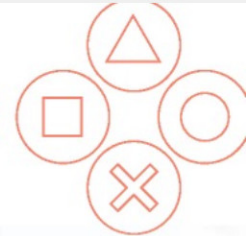
It would be folly for us to ignore the influence that *Total Recall* has had on the *Red Faction* series, and it would be daft for us to think it's anything other than a bloody great influence. While some (see **Play** 192's J'accuse) think this is a bad thing, some are wrong and don't represent **Play**'s actual opinion. Namely: anything that lets us live out our *Total Recall* fantasies, transporting us to Mars and letting us blow stuff up, is all right. We do wish there were more opportunities to shout "SCREW YOOOU!" and see three-boobed prostitutes, naturally, but we're happy to take what we can get.



Geo-Mod [should have] set a new standard

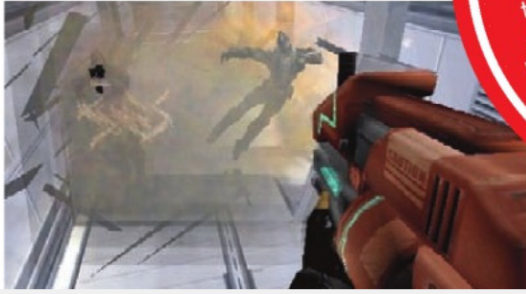
We're willing to admit that the different iterations of Geo-Mod over *Red Faction*'s successive versions haven't exactly been adopted by the gaming world as a whole. While we dreamt of all games involving mega destructibility and the chance to sneak up on an enemy by exploding your own route around them, we were instead offered very little. But times are a-changing and destruction is becoming a more important factor in recent games, such as the *Battlefield: Bad Company* or *Mercenaries* series. As technology and development processes progress we will see this kind of thing popping up – or being knocked down – more and more, and we can look back to the original *Red Faction* as being one of the earliest examples. Though not *the* earliest, of course.





Longevity and affordability

That isn't actually a clever or oblique heading – it's pretty straightforward. See, we recently went back to play the first two *Red Faction* titles and they both hold up quite well. Obviously they've aged, but they're good enough to break out and have a play on, which brings us to the second point: if you don't have either of the first two games or *Red Faction: Guerrilla* then you can pick them all up for a grand total of about £15. None of the games have retained much in the way of monetary value, but all of them have retained value where it actually matters – in how well they play. Go on, you know you want to.



Hammer. Chimney stack. Fun

The talk of the tech may have dominated many column inches about the *Red Faction* games, but they overlooked the actual outcome of all this: the ability to take a superpowered hammer to a giant chimney stack and turn it into rubble. The very first game let you plough through walls in a tank. The second game encouraged you to flank sentry guns by blowing up walls and simply going around. The third game just let you mess about with explosives and hammers. For all the bold claims, all the tech, AI routines, vehicles, storylines and influences, *Red Faction* is about one thing we truly, deeply love: destroying things. It's primal, it's not what you would call mature, but it's oh so satisfying.

Chances = 1,000,000:1

Previous *Red Faction* games have all had communist undertones – uniting the workers to overthrow the oppression of the established order and working together for a better society, freed from the shackles imposed by the bourgeoisie. Or something. *Red Faction: Armageddon*, though, brings something we never thought we'd see to the series in the shape of aliens. The Martians, it seems, have been milling around under the surface all this time. Now someone's managed to disturb them and they're really not that happy about it. We did question where the series could go seeing as Mars is liberated in *Guerrilla*, so this is as good an answer as any.

THE RED FACTION series isn't a critical darling, nor is it an artistic masterpiece. What it is, though, is a game that taps right into our childhood fantasies of moving to Mars to be a miner, as well as our ever-present desire to blow crap up. With the upcoming *Armageddon* and even a TV series planned, it looks like a once-dormant series is receiving the push we wanted.



WHAT MAKES ENSLAVED TICK?

HEAVENLY SWORD DEVELOPER NINJA THEORY GIVES US THE EXCLUSIVE INSIDE STORY ON ITS LATEST GAME, ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

"It's been a massively iterative process and a very rewarding one. It requires a certain artistic detachment, but at the same time you need to own it to give it the love it deserves." – Jim Waters, lead environment art ninja

ART

The most striking thing about *Enslaved* is arguably its art style, which despite being set in a post-apocalyptic world is full of colour and life. This is a move on Ninja Theory's part that affects many aspects of *Enslaved*. After the design team created areas in the game, the art team would paint over screenshots again and again to try and bring as much life to it as possible.

"One of my favourite movies is *Princess Mononoke*, because it's beautiful in every sense and one of my favourite moments is when they go into the forest. I wanted to recreate that feeling, but what if instead of having trees we have parts of robots, because nature has reclaimed everything?" – Alessandro Taini, visual art direction ninja

"We learnt a lot of things from Alex [Garland] and we took those lessons on board and applied them to every situation we could possibly fathom. Once we knew how to do that stuff, once he had shown us how, we took those lessons and spread them out." – Tameem Antoniades, chief creative ninja

"Everybody tries to add their little touch of personality through the animation, the sound and everything else. We start adding all the sub-surface details, tan-lines, dirt, scratches and after a while you actually start having a bit of a narrative through the character itself." – Ben Flynn, lead character art ninja

STORY

For Ninja Theory, becoming better storytellers is really what *Enslaved* has been all about. With the help of Alex Garland, scriptwriter for movies such as *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine*, the developer went about putting together a tale that would not only drive gameplay, but enhance it by weaving the story into the action and using music to elevate the whole experience.

"We worked with the same composer, Nitin Sawhney, and he's got a string of awards under his name. More importantly than that, though, is that he's just a brilliant composer." – Tom Colvin, lead audio ninja

GAMEPLAY

While there was much to be proud of from Ninja Theory's development of *Heavenly Sword*, lessons were learned from how that game played out and were brought to bear on *Enslaved*. The balletic combat of Nariko was one thing, but Monkey in *Enslaved* needed something more practical, so out went high-level combos and QTEs to be replaced by tactics and force.

"I find it hard to play *Heavenly Sword*, just because all I see now is a lot of faults and I'm more positive now about this game than I was at the same time about *Heavenly Sword*."
– Tameem Antoniades

"From *Kung Fu Chaos* to *Heavenly Sword* there was a massive jump in terms of style. With *Heavenly Sword* we kind of found our feet, but hopefully with *Enslaved* we've taken it one step further. Monkey – because of his background – is not meant to have that grace that Nariko had." – Guy Midgley, lead animation ninja

"*God Of War*'s got QTEs down to a tee; every other game that does them gets slated because they don't do it quite as well. I also accept the criticism that it takes you out of the core experience. So, you have the takedowns, which is a one-button affair, close the gap, do the takedown, get his weapon and then that thing becomes useful." – Tameem Antoniades

"With Monkey the first idea I had was to make him a superhero, kind of like Iron Man, but after only a few ideas I thought that really since we wanted to populate this environment with robots, it would be cool to have a human being with visible skin against the metal." – Alessandro Taini

"Throughout the whole evolution of the characters you're thinking about the relationship between them and it might be cool to have a character that's got loads of metal on him, but is that really going to cut it when we want to tell quite an intimate story with moments between characters?" – Stuart Adcock, technical art direction ninja

CHARACTER

The most important pillar of *Enslaved* is its characters, as they hold together the story, gameplay and art of the game. Each received a great deal of attention in the design process. Monkey went through a number of designs, some like Iron Man and Wolverine, while Trip didn't always have the red hair that has seen her compared to the heroine of Ninja Theory's last game.

"The big challenge comes in trying to make it feel like it's all the same guy, and it's Andy Serkis actually in the game playing Monkey. Hopefully with *Enslaved* we've managed to make it as seamless as possible so you don't get the feeling that one thing is done one way and another thing was done differently." – Guy Midgley

"We went through different iterations [of Trip] with different colour hair, but it is a slightly different hue to Nariko. Slightly different. We've moved on a bit." – Stuart Adcock



IMMORTAL

Mortal Kombat is being reinvented and reinvigorated next year, taking things back to its 2D roots and making the ridiculous levels of gore take centre stage. But what elements of the series' past do we want to see make a comeback? Yes, we'll be overusing the letter K a lot here...

FINISH HIM! (OR HER)

The five Fatalities we'd welcome with open arms



1 SUB-ZERO'S SPINAL RIP

This is the classic Fatality. We won't question how he actually rips the head off and the spinal column out, because this is a man who can shoot ice from his hands. *He doesn't have to make sense.*



2 BO' RAI CHO'S FLAMING FART

How are we supposed to ignore the contribution of a fat, drunk bloke? Kindred spirits as we are, we cannot. Especially when one of his Fatalities involves literally killing his opponent with a fart. Sadly, we don't expect to see him in the sequel.



3 VARIOUS PIT FATALITIES

Almost guaranteed to be returning are the pit Fatalities that have come with every MK game since its inception. These see some variation of a defeated opponent knocked into a pit of spikes or into some spinny mincey things.



4 SHANG TSUNG'S HIDDEN KINTARO GUT-PUNCH

Not many people know about this, but it was present in most versions of *MK II* – including the version on PSN for £3.49. Hold Low Punch for 25 seconds, stand a step away from your opponent and... well, the image tells you the rest.



5 SMOKE'S OVERKILL

Robot Smoke opted for the exact opposite of subtlety with one of his Fatalities in *Mortal Kombat 3*. Rather than simply kill his opponent, Robo-Smoke would opt to blow up the entire world. Despite our confusion, we still find it funny.

CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY

What literary masterpieces of MK's history should return?

1 SUB-ZERO AND SCORPION'S RIVALRY

One killed the other, who came back from hell for revenge. But then the killer was replaced, and then there was an unmasking, and one maybe not being killed and we've gone cross-eyed...



2 ARMAGEDDON: MK'S 'FINAL' BATTLE

Some classic, old-fashioned 'alternate history' stuff is the perfect way to cover the fact that *Armageddon* was meant to be the last MK game. We wouldn't expect anything less.



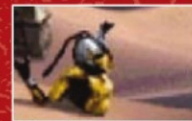
3 THE DEATH OF LIU KANG

Later games in the series saw mainstay Liu Kang killed off – a bold move for any developer, and one you're unlikely to see in many other series. We look forward to such bold moves again.



4 CYRAX STUCK IN THE DESERT

There are a lot of story elements we would like to see covered in more detail, and one of them... well, isn't Cyrax being stuck in the desert. That was just a bit stupid, wasn't it?



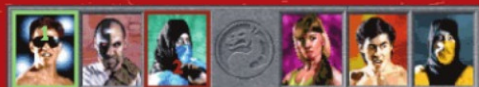
5 MK VS DC

It would be nice if *MK 2011* made reference to the fact that the likes of Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Raiden et al were waging pitched battles against Superman, Batman and the Green Lantern.



KOMBAT

IMMORTAL KOMBAT



CHOOSE YOUR FIGHTER

The kanny kast of MK kharacters (sorry)



1 RAIDEN

We know that Raiden is in, so there's no need to be hopeful about him making an appearance. As long as he retains his flying body press thing, we'll be happy.



2 BARAKA

Some of us were never able to get over Baraka's omission from *Mortal Kombat 3*, which sent some of us into a deep depression. Hopefully that feeling won't return with *MK 2011*.



3 NITARA

We wouldn't have included this vampiric little lassie were it not for the fact that in *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* there are references in her dialogue to the likes of Def Leppard and KISS.



4 KENSHI

To be honest, it gets a bit harder to bring up any truly memorable characters from the later *MK* titles. Kenshi, however, will always stick with us – how could a blind swordsman not?



5 PALETTE-SWAPPING NINJAS

No *Mortal Kombat* game would be complete without a gang of palette-swapped ninjas. Originally made due to the limited memory of arcades of the past, they're guaranteed to return.

MISSING IN ACTION

The things we don't expect to see in next year's *MK*

1 CLAYMATION

Goro, Kintaro, Sheeva, Motaro – all gone. Cast into the ether. Dead. They could – and should – actually appear in *Mortal Kombat 2011*, but it won't be the same unless they're stop-motion-animated clay models of the characters.



2 PAUL WS ANDERSON

We don't lament this in the slightest. The fact that the film director of questionable talent, director of the original *Mortal Kombat* movie, won't have anything to do with *MK 2011* can only be a good thing.



3 MYTHOLOGIES

Sub-Zero will have some storyline, but he won't have anything approaching the utterly awful garbage that came with 1997's *Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub-Zero*. One of the series' low points, it's something we like to forget ever existed.



4 CARLOS PESINA

Well, not just Carlos Pesina, but all of the other actors included in *Mortal Kombat* games over the years. We've moved on from the time of the original games, where real-life actors were digitised into the game.



5 SPECIAL FORCES

Sonya Blade will likely be in *MK 2011*, as will her crime-busting partner Jax – so there will be special forces in the new game. But we mean like *Mortal Kombat: Special Forces*, another diabolical game released on the original PlayStation.



REVENGE OF THE NERDS

Comic-Con, the yearly convention highlighting all that is good and great in the world of comics, movies, videogames and general geek culture managed to bring a few thrills, spills and minor revelations our way this year. But for those of you who didn't pay attention, this should hopefully show you why you should next time around...

THE GAMES

Aside from what we've covered elsewhere in this very issue, Comic-Con did provide a few tidbits, snippets and otherwise interesting information on a number of different games. Read on...

RUSH N' ATTACK: EX-PATRIOT

Not much came out about *Rush N' Attack: Ex-Patriot* at Comic-Con, though some new screens and a couple of tidbits popped up to keep us ticking over until this remake of the classic 1985 arcade game. One thing that made us smile was how Konami is using the Russian martial art 'systema' in the game, which is really quite brutal.



RED FACTION: ARMAGEDDON We've covered this a few times already in the pages of Play, but this time it's special. Why? Oh not because of the game, but because at Comic-Con THQ constructed a full-size exosuit for attendees to put on and pose in. If that's not entirely, utterly and completely within the spirit of Comic-Con then we don't know what is.

SHANK If all goes according to plan then *Shank* should be available to buy by the time you read this. It's a brutal, bloody and beautiful combat platformer. As for its Comic-Con appearance? Well that showed the game in a whole new, co-operative light as it was revealed we can indeed play the game with friends.



DC UNIVERSE ONLINE There is light at the end of this superhero-flanked tunnel, as a release date was confirmed for *DCUO*. It seems we've been waiting forever to see if MMOs will work on PS3, but soon we'll be able to find out. Also revealed was an epic trailer for the game, revealing our favourite heroes may be forced into making a pact with ol' baldy, Lex Luthor. Intriguing.



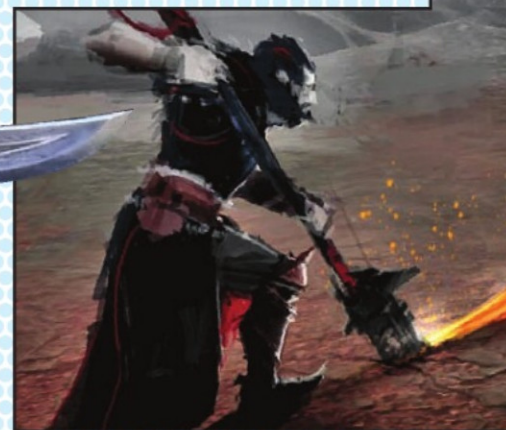
TRON EVOLUTION Aside from the requisite showing of the game – and some nifty recreations of Flynn's arcade from the original movie – Disney revealed some interesting merchandising options for the upcoming sequel movie and videogame adaptations of *Tron*. A PS3 stand? Fine, nice, great. A PS3 pad that lights up in fancy neon colours? Sign us up immediately.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3 It made perfect sense to see *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* strutting its stuff at Comic-Con and Capcom announced two new characters to the world: the thunder god, Thor, and Okami's own Amaterasu. Aside from these two additions, we also saw more wonderful in-game footage that makes us want the game all the more.



KINGDOMS OF AMALUR This first title from 38 Studios sees the coming together of fantasy author RA Salvatore, *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane and lead designer of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, Ken Rolston. That's the kind of all-star cast you don't see very much in games. This action-RPG has us really quite interested.



ANYTHING ELSE?

Apparently, this Comic-Con thing isn't just about videogames

The Comic-Con show has grown over the years and welcomed ever-growing audiences of fans, enthusiasts and the most wonderfully costumed geeks the world has ever seen. The convention's tie-ins with the world of comics and videogames are great but the real thing that has turned Comic-Con from just another convention into one of the must-attend events for any discerning fan of all things *awesome* is the movie biz. They bring the big names, the big names bring the fans in droves. Comic-Con 2010 was proof, if proof need be, that showing a video of *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* isn't exactly on the same level as a surprise appearance by Harrison Ford.



THE COMICS Stan Lee was promoting three new characters being released under his Boom Studios stable: Soldier Zero, a wheelchair-bound teacher who becomes bonded to an alien soldier and becomes a superhero; The Traveler, a time-travelling hero who doesn't care if he upsets timelines or changes the course of history; and Starborn, a normal bloke who discovers he is the heir to an intergalactic empire and fights to liberate his people – even though he might be the bad guy. It's things like this that remind us why comics are great.



THE FILMS This year was dominated by no single movie, with many different properties getting the crowds whipped up into a frenzy. Edgar Wright's adaptation of *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* took home some rave reviews, *Battle: Los Angeles* showed us all that it may be a videogame movie in all but name, and the rather beefy stars of *The Expendables* (which looks like it could be the greatest movie ever made) showed up to chat about how utterly manly they all are. There was something for everyone really.



DRAGON AGE 2 *Dragon Age 2* was shown during the convention and managed to get itself some heavy opining thrown its way, with many people expressing some concern that the game has adopted a more action-heavy stance. We've heard nothing but good things about it, though, so we're more than willing to reserve judgement for the time being.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS



THE COSTUMES It wouldn't be much of a convention without cosplay throughout, and this year's Comic-Con didn't disappoint. We've had a few highlights reported back to us, from the countless, thoroughly detailed *Team Fortress 2* characters, through the ridiculous collection of absurdly pretty girls in skimpy, geeky uniforms. Rather than go on about it here, we should just recommend you go back to – or pick up a copy of – Play #186, where we covered cosplay in quite some detail.



THE REST Comic-Con 2010 had its fair share of goings on outside the convention halls. The witty, clever and downright brilliant counter-picketing of the Westboro Baptist Church's own protest was a victory for good humour, for one. Inside, Ryan Reynolds showed the world why it is okay to like the man, with a rousing rendition of the Green Lantern's oath making the day – nay, *life* – of a young fan. Not everything was rosy, though, as one over-stressed attendee stabbed another in the face with a pen – though it did lead to some hilarious (though in poor taste) costumes not long after.

KOJIMA ON COMIC-CON

Hideo Kojima, oh he of many philosophical debates in his *Metal Gear Solid* series, had this to say about Comic-Con via his Twitter feed:

"Comic-Con used to be an American Comic festival. Nowadays, it's been a place of announcements for films and games as well."

Okay, it's not earth-shattering, but it is fact. That much you can't argue.



ELSEWHERE IN THE MAG

As pointed out, there were other announcements and reveals made throughout Comic-Con for games we've covered this issue. With that in mind, here's a handy list:



STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN / TEKKEN X STREET FIGHTER were announced to a fair amount of surprise. They're not out for a while, though, so in the meantime check our preview on page 70.

ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD had a new multiplayer trailer to get us that bit more excited, as well as news that the beta – mentioned at E3 – would be running from September. Head to page 60 for more.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2011 was also shown at the event, though there wasn't much said about it. You're better off going straight to page 61 for our hands-on preview with this bad boy.

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II had a developer diary video released, along with confirmation that The Fett himself will be making an appearance in the game. Check out page 64 for our hands-on impressions, though.

JAMES BOND 007: BLOOD STONE

was demoed to attendees at the show, but rather than us just re-hash it here we decided to give the game our full attention. Look at page 52 for the proof.





CITY OF INSANITY

First Batman: Arkham City details revealed

A NEW MASTERMIND?

HUGO STRANGE HAS been appointed as the new warden of Arkham after the old warden, Quincy Sharp, was elected mayor and set up Arkham City by walling off Gotham's slums. However, things don't seem to be going so well. Strange is one of Batman's oldest enemies from the comics, predating even The Joker. He may also know Batman's true identity.



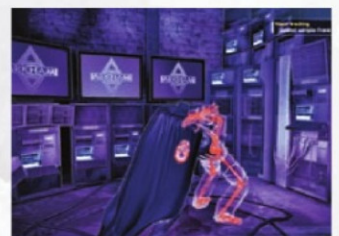
MAD HOUSES

EACH OF THE villains has set up their own gangs in the city as Arkham inmates look for protection and the bosses fight for influence and power. The Riddler has his own gang and his trophies return, but he still may not appear. Thanks to a new vision mode Batman can see each inmate's gang affiliation, which could be handy if he only wants to target one group.



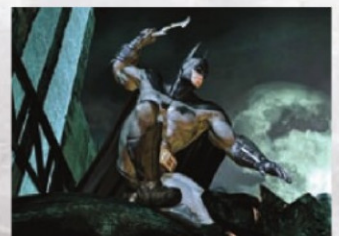
JUST CALL HIM GRISSOM

'THE WORLD'S GREATEST Detective' will be earning his name in *Arkham City* as more forensic work and puzzles will be included in this sequel, such as judging bullet trajectory to find a sniper's position in the region. This may also tie into the larger game world that will include side missions and objectives for the first time.



NEW ABILITIES

YOU'LL START ARKHAM City with the gadgets you ended the last game with, but they can be upgraded and used in combat. One example is the ability to spray explosives on a thug during a struggle. The fighting system from the first game remains the same, but you'll have more enemies to fight. To compensate Batman can now counter multiple attacks at once.



CHARACTER BIOS

Arkham City's confirmed cast detailed



BATMAN
AKA: Bruce Wayne

The Dark Knight is of course our hero once again, this time attempting to contain the madness of Arkham City as the many forces within its walls threaten to spill into Gotham.



CATWOMAN
AKA: Selina Kyle

The cat burglar and on/off love interest of Batman, Catwoman gets into trouble in *Arkham City* as she is captured by Two-Face in his bid to gain influence in the region.



TWO-FACE
AKA: Harvey Dent

The former Gotham district attorney is desperate to survive in Arkham and thinks a public execution of Catwoman will help draw in followers.



THE JOKER
AKA: N/A

Having survived the poisoning from the last game *The Joker* remains sick as Arkham City begins, but the source of his illness is unknown. His power base in the district is strong, though.



HARLEY QUINN
AKA: Dr Harleen Quinzel

Harley abandons her nurse outfit for something a little less conspicuous. She will be confronting Batman again, though.



QUINCY SHARP
AKA: N/A

Sharp has run for mayor, bought up the Gotham slums, walled them up and closed Arkham Asylum and Black Gate prison to create Arkham City. What was he thinking?



HUGO STRANGE
AKA: N/A

Batman comic fans will know that Strange is one of Batman's oldest enemies. He is the new warden of Arkham City, but he could well have other interests.



ZSASZ
AKA: Victor Zsasz

This killer escaped from Gotham PD's clutches during *Arkham Asylum*, but remains in Arkham City with a small power base. Some side missions will involve him.



ALFRED
AKA: N/A

Bruce Wayne's faithful butler is acting as Batman's contact during *Arkham City* at the moment. Could this mean that Oracle (AKA Barbara Gordon) is in trouble? We shall see.

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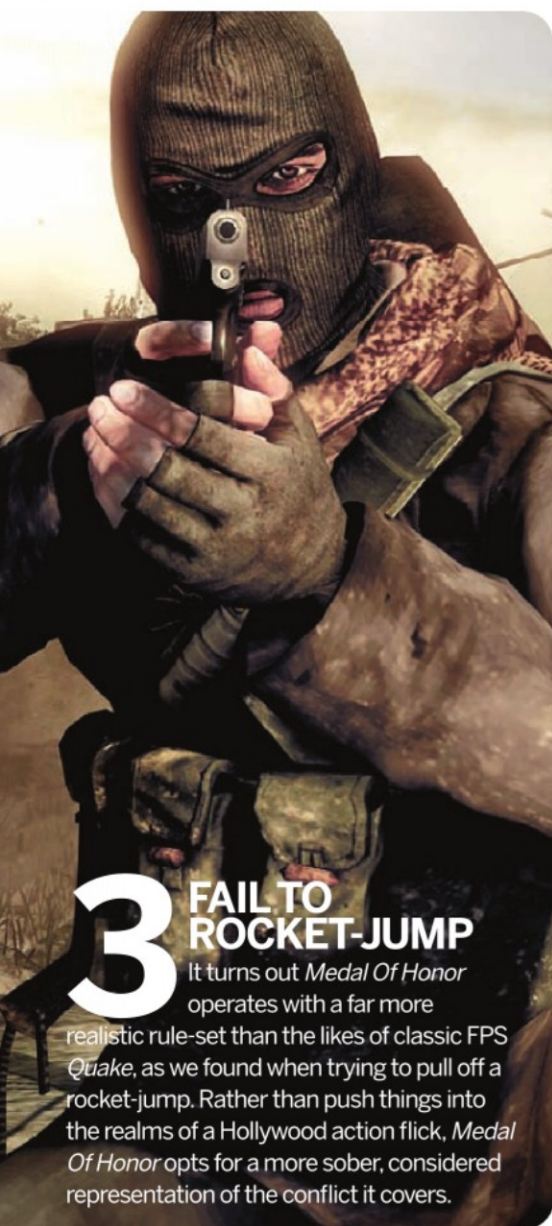


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5

SHOCK AND WAR

FIVE THINGS YOU can and should do in *Medal Of Honor's* multiplayer mode. How well catered for are we by EA's upcoming shooter?



3 FAIL TO ROCKET-JUMP

It turns out *Medal Of Honor* operates with a far more realistic rule-set than the likes of classic FPS *Quake*, as we found when trying to pull off a rocket-jump. Rather than push things into the realms of a Hollywood action flick, *Medal Of Honor* opts for a more sober, considered representation of the conflict it covers.



4 GET LOST

The streets of Afghanistan's towns are packed with objects, filled with tight back alleys and home to pitched, urban combat. The countryside is large, sparse and lacking in cover. Both of which are places you can lose your bearings, unless you pay close attention to the world around you.



2 LOSE

This may just be us and our near-legendary penchant for being a bit bum at online shooters, but *Medal Of Honor* does strike us as yet another way in which nix1994 and [moh]emo_pwns can consistently kill you without you knowing how or why.



1 FIGHT FOR EITHER SIDE

One side are coalition forces and the other is made up of Taliban soldiers. Two very different sides of an ongoing, real-world conflict, representing two very different ideological standpoints... but which side has the better sniper? See, we prefer the coalition side because his special explosive is far more satisfying to use.

5 RAMBLE AROUND AN EMPTY SERVER

Honestly, in the beta we did this for a while just to get a feel for things – it can be fantastically liberating to be able to explore without risk of being shot in the face. As well as the fact that this basically trains you to remember levels, you can also take in the look of the game.

TEAM PICKS

Everyone's got a favourite medal, right? Here are the **Play** team's



GAVIN



JIM'LL FIX IT BADGE

Jim will have fixed it for me to do something I've wanted to do since 1998. Britney Spears will also be deserving of a medal for bravery.



IAN



GEORGE CROSS

I am not in the military, nor will I ever be. Hence, this is the best medal I could ever get. I intend to have one by the time I'm 35.



JON



FA CUP MEDAL

The 'magic' of the cup is constantly challenged, but for club fans who don't take winning silverware for granted, the FA Cup is still a competition to revere and it is for me too.



KEITH



MEDAL OF BRAVERY

The medal that Luke and Han receive at the end of *A New Hope* – I'd probably give it to Chewbacca, though, as for some reason the Wookiee missed out.

Alberto
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RE:PLAY



While everyone else panics about the end of gaming as we know it in the face of Move, one gamer revisits more innocent times



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
Devil's Avocado

When *Tomb Raider II* came out, I was already an adult, but actually a lot of my earliest memories involve computer games. When I was about four years old, my dad was a computer programmer (as a job and as a hobby) and my teenage brother a keen gamer. My dad would copy the code for simple games onto his Sinclair ZX81 for me, and I'd constantly harass my brother for a turn on *Jet Set Willy* when we got a Spectrum 48k. I liked it because I knew the word 'willy' was rude. So yeah, this is why this month's Star Letter struck a chord with me.

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Core Memory

My old man was recently upstairs playing something on our PC. I went upstairs only to see him playing *Tomb Raider II*. As we sat there, going through the game, it made me think about how games can hold memories. I know it sounds soppy but it's true! I grew up watching my dad play games like *Tomb Raider* on our computer and loving it. I would sit there like it's a movie and I would occasionally pitch in with a solution to a puzzle, which was usually wrong! However, it was when my dad was replaying it when my memories of all the levels came flooding back. To other people, finding an alien spacecraft or fighting a giant spider is just a very cheesy scenario in a mediocre game, but to me it means more.

Because it was the only example of gaming I had, it meant a lot and these moments scared, excited and puzzled me, I loved them. I'm basically trying to say that games hold memories, and these memories can be resurfaced. I'm sure you feel the same about other games.

James Ward, Godalming

Oh, what a heart-warming tale. *Tomb Raider II*'s not just an unforgettable classic, it's actually capable of bonding father and son together even now, 13 years after its original release. And yes, we do feel the same way about other games. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* always reminds Keith of playing it with

★ STAR letter



It might look like a fuzzy, pixelated mess now, but this game holds a firm place in a lot of hearts.

his brother and two cousins on holiday in Weymouth, Ali's dad used to get her to watch him playing *Doom* because she was better at remembering the map than him and, to this day, playing *Shadow Of The Beast* always reminds me of my first girlfriend.

Say Neigh To Racism

I've never really encountered racism in online multiplayer before, but *Red Dead Redemption* has seemingly spawned a community of racist bigots. I've put 254 hours into the online matches and I have never been so disgusted with the comments I hear. They're not directed at me, but it's still beyond disgusting. I have found myself grief reporting players to Sony so many times since buying it. I know for a fact Rockstar is well aware that there are some

nasty people playing *RDR* and in an upcoming DLC it is going to improve the grief reporting in-game. Do you think the online community does enough to prevent this behaviour?

Anthony Barnes, via email

I don't think the online community does do enough, as I suspect most people don't bother reporting gamers for using racist language, or for any other breaches of the rules. But I think the question should really be: does Sony do enough? Personally I'd like the network to be policed 24/7 by Sony employees with the power to insta-ban. It would be impossible to cover every match of every game, but if there were a couple of hundred PSN cops on a constant beat it might act as a deterrent and mean that action is taken before damage is done, rather than after.

PS Plea

I have owned a PSP (original) since its release. It has brought me much joy, however, it's no longer in peak condition. So I've decided to invest in a new PSP. My problem is choosing which one to buy.

On the one hand I have about 15 UMD games gathering dust in my bedroom (not because they are



It's not *Red Dead Redemption*'s fault some of the people playing it suck.

bad but because my PSnotsoP won't play them unless charging) which leads me to lean towards getting a PSP3000.

On the other hand, a reliable site, 'ShopTo.net', has a deal offering a PSPgo for £174 with ten games and also a £20 PSN card, on top of this I have recently purchased PSN+ meaning that I'll be getting at least three things a month free which I can transfer to my PSP.

I want the PSPgo because it looks way cooler than the other PSPs and it has a great deal of memory, also I won't have to fork out the extra for the games included.

On the other hand, paying full price for games from the PSN store is a bit lame when you can find UMDs on the internet for far less. Also it would render my current UMDs useless.

Please help me make my decision.

Daley Roberts, via email

Unfortunately, Daley, I don't think I can help. You've outlined the pros and cons of each model and ultimately the decision has to be yours. It's interesting to note that Sony uses both models in its promotional campaigns, which suggests the PSP3000 is not seen as obsolete. It



Really, it comes down to a question of taste.



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of 2K Games. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of *Mafia II*, which is available now for the PS3 (£49.99).

✖ STUPID letter



Give it a rest, will you? It's really not that good.

256 Whiners

I think *MAG* has got a bit too much stick recently and I think some people are missing the point. *MAG* is supposed to be a game that rewards you over time and dedication as you said yourself. So it may not be as welcoming to newbies as perhaps some other games out there but it isn't supposed to be a pick-up-and-play title like *Call Of Duty*. The point of it is to make it more tactically fuelled and intense, using the squads and platoons to aid that. Even if this doesn't work sometimes, occasionally it does and it can actually be really fun. Oh, and also there's 256 players! So I was hoping you could maybe bump the score up to maybe 70 something.

Jack Cathcart, Belfast

No, we could maybe not. C'mon Jack, you said yourself it "occasionally" works. We're sorry, but that's not good enough for anything higher than a 68% score. Honestly, what is it with people defending *MAG* all the time? We do like the game, just not that much.

really comes down to what you prefer, but try to think long-term. There are some great deals on the PSPgo right now, but think hard about whether a download-only machine is *really* what you want.

Prampage!

As I write this, I write with a broken heart. Way back in issue 185 I sent an email in explaining my beloved console's survival of a vicious attack by my fiancée. In a nutshell, she decided to test its flying capability up the front garden. Now... I write in to tell you all about its demise.

My PS3 has been with me since release date and we've had some great memories together. I *really* love my PlayStation, but now it ceases to exist. It's nothing to do with my fiancée this time, though. Well, in a way it kinda is seeing as she's the one who gave birth to the assailant!

F.A.Q.

The way things are going, after a long hard day we'll have to come home and bounce around the room waving our arms around.

Paul Tracey, via email
...said Zebedee.

Please, do not change the direction of the magazine so everything revolves around 3D and Move.

Matthew Leslie, via email

We won't. They're just big news at the moment is all. We won't forget that *Play* is for gamers who, primarily, love their games.

So well done Rockstar and shame on you Infinity Ward. Needless to say I won't be lining your pockets any more.

Neill Ives, Norwich

It's actually Activision that sets the price of *Modern Warfare* DLC, but yes, Rockstar has set a great example with its free *Red Dead Redemption* content.

Is there a way to make costume requests to Media Molecule for outfits in *LittleBigPlanet*?

Iain Magill, via email
www.mediamolecule.com/about/contact_us. They love to hear from you, they really do.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



- Single-player vs multiplayer **34%**
- DLC rip-offs **30%**
- Going through the motion controls **26%**
- Fond memories **10%**

PLAY GOPLAY
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Topic: PLAY Podcast
How do I know you're not lying?
Talking Yak

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Portal 2
Just because it's unique people burn it.
Equinox1.0

SUBJECT: FIRST PLAY

Topic: Rage
This game is a flight, we were shocked to see such a great price point for a title that really gives *Punch-Out!* a run for its money. The problem is really difficult, so it's not for everybody, but at this stage, *Punch-Out!* the fans know what they are in order.
mickycruiser

My daughter has been exploring around the house in her walker and it seemed like she took a liking to her daddy's first pride and joy. After months of saying "NO!!" every time she waddled over to start pulling at the PS3, I let my guard down ONCE! I go into the kitchen to make a cup of coffee and all of a sudden, everything goes quiet. If any of you have kids you'll know they're up to something when they go quiet. I peek suspiciously back into the sitting room to check on the baby and what do I see? I saw said baby with a huge smile on her face and a tiny hand on my PS3. I spout my regular "NO!!" but instead of the tantrum that's usually thrown, she tipped it over and it landed heavily on its front.

I ran over and immediately turned it on, I went cold... She had broken it. I don't mean to state the obvious but I will, I was heartbroken.

Can anyone tell me how a PS3 can survive a flight up the front garden but not a mischievous ten month old?

Cal Nash, via email

I can't tell you that, Cal, but I might be able to tell you why your fiancée and



If you don't want your baby to break your electronics put huge, soft gloves on it.

child have been so intent on destroying your PS3. "Broken heart", "beloved", "great memories together", "love", "first pride and joy", "heartbroken" – all references not to your fiancée or child, but to your PS3. By contrast, the human beings in your life are "vicious", "mischievous" and an "assailant". I don't think it's a coincidence that they've both attacked your PS3 – they're competing for your affections, Cal. Your daughter didn't take a *liking* to daddy's PS3, she's been out to destroy it for months now – it represents competition! And we think you may only have yourself to blame.

Not that I'm a qualified family therapist or anything, mind you.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- 1** What kind of emotions and memories does revisiting old computer games stir up for you?
- 2** Do you report players using racist or homophobic language? If not, why?
- 3** What's more important: your PS3 or your family?

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the big story





BACK IN BLACK

**EXCLUSIVE MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON
WITH CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS**

Play joins Treyarch at its Santa Monica headquarters
for an exclusive chat and numerous exclusive rounds
of multiplayer action with Call Of Duty: Black Ops
– the biggest game of 2010!



“We like to think of this game as sort of a ‘Best Of...’ laughs Treyarch online director, Dan Bunting. “We’ve taken a lot of inspiration from *Call Of Duty 4*. That’s where we’ve drawn from for things like weapon balance and game feel. I think it was successful in that respect. The player recognition components that *Modern Warfare 2* brought to the game were great. We love how you always feel like you’re getting some kind of feedback and some kind of little mini-achievement in the game. *World At War* had a lot of purity to some of the weapons – that’s something we’ve tried to keep and maintain. So really it’s a little bit of everything.”

A little bit of everything in this case does, it has to be said, include an awful lot of ideas, mechanics, formulae and, of course, a brand created by an entirely separate studio. There can be no doubt Treyarch owes an awful lot to Infinity Ward, and no one working on *Black Ops* is trying to shy away from that fact. It’s also true that, despite combined sales well exceeding 20 million units, Treyarch’s *Call Of Duty* games have always stood in the shadow of those developed by Infinity Ward. They haven’t been quite as good, and they haven’t sold quite as well. But two years ago it was decided that it wasn’t enough to have Treyarch producing stopgap *COD* titles to keep the Activision war chest full to the brim during the intervals between Infinity Ward releases. As work began on *Black Ops* in 2008, Treyarch was relieved of all other... ahem... duties (*Bond* games, *Spider-Man* games and so on) so that all of its staff and resources could be focused solely on one project. Studio head Mark Lamia believes there’s a total of over 300 people working on *Black Ops*. This team is not playing second fiddle to anyone any more.

And we can tell you, with a whole day’s intensive play under our belts, that the benefits of this increase in focus, personnel and resources are not just evident, but abundant in *Black Ops*’ multiplayer modes. It has the influence of *Modern Warfare* all over it, but it’s much more than a slightly tweaked imitation. Treyarch’s got a tight grip on the *Call Of Duty* reins this time and is pushing the franchise into new territory in numerous ways with a confidence and skill we didn’t expect.

“There’s so much [we couldn’t have done before],” explains Bunting. “The films feature – a lot of people thought we were crazy to do that in the first place, even with the team we have. But miraculously, it came together much faster than we thought it was going to in the beginning because, y’know, it’s such a massive undertaking. There’s so much in the game that’s new. The quantity and volume of features and the polish we’ve been able to get is indicative of that kind of focus.”

He’s not wrong, there is a lot of new stuff to talk about, and that films feature – or Theater mode, as it’s currently known in-game – has

and, should you so wish, edit it and turn it into a video file that can be shared on the web or even attached to your in-game player profile.

The editing tools allow you to cut out any boring bits of the match, to view the action from any camera position and angle you want, and even to control the play speed if you want to spin on through a lull in the conflict or savour a particularly satisfying kill in slow motion. Basically, you can make your match replays look like mini action movies. These tools aren’t ready to be used for live, real-time editing yet – and won’t be for *Black Ops* – but this does feel like a significant step towards making gaming a spectator sport that’s actually good to watch. Altogether, it’s a pretty exciting idea.

Another bold change Treyarch has made is the addition of Currency awards. Each match now rewards you with Currency as well as XP and to use any new weapon, item, Perk or Killstreak you have to both unlock it by reaching the necessary XP level and buy it using Currency. This affords you a lot more freedom and choice in terms of how your ‘character’ develops and, like the Theater mode, feeds into

the ‘Compete, Customise, Create’ mantra Treyarch has been using through *Black Ops*’ multiplayer development. Many of the unlocks are cosmetic so, on top of being able to choose

what type of camo goes on your gun, you can design your own emblem using a simple layer shape system and can even get your emblem and/or clan tag printed onto your gun. It’s a nice touch although be warned, Treyarch believes there is no greater humiliation in *Black Ops* than watching a Killcam replay of an opponent killing you with your own gun, emblem and clan tag clearly displayed for all to see.

If you find you’re unlocking more items than you can actually afford to buy, then there

ANTI-CHEATING SECURITY MEASURES IN BLACK OPS WILL BE THE MOST STRINGENT THE CALL OF DUTY SERIES HAS EVER SEEN

to be the most substantial new addition. Taking its cue from the hundreds of *Call Of Duty* multiplayer videos posted on YouTube (everyone’s seen ‘Amazing Knife Throw’, right?), Treyarch has devised a simple but powerful toolset to allow any player to make a movie out of any match in which he or she has played. Every single match anyone plays will be recorded and stored as data on the *Black Ops* servers for a limited time, so you can view a replay of any match you’ve played in recently





● If a team bunched up this much in a real game, they'd lose.



● There are loads of ways to set your opponents on fire.



● See that '2' painted on the wall? That's where the choke point is.



● Custom face camo jobs are perfect for the elite operative who wants to fool his enemy into thinking he's just been to a funfair.

are two ways to boost your bank balance, both of which involve gambling some or all of whatever funds you do have. The first of these is Contracts, which are essentially optional Challenges that you have to buy, but that pay out big if you complete them within a set time limit. For example,

we paid 50 Currency for a Contract specifying that we get ten assault rifle kills in one match. It expired after 40 minutes of game time, which allowed us a few matches to attempt it. We did it in the first match, though, assault rifle kills being something of a speciality, and it paid out 200 Currency. Nice. You're limited to holding a maximum of three Contracts at any one time and you can only do each of them once, so they can't be used for grinding and spamming. Treyarch also says that the system is set up to allow more Contracts to be added in updates. This will ensure hardcore players need never run out of Contracts, and will allow Treyarch

to add specific temporary Contracts for incentive promotions – for example, 'Headshots Weekend' or 'Domination Tuesdays.'

If that sounds like a fun way to blow all the Currency you could have spent on something cool if you'd just had the patience to earn a little more through

old-fashioned hard work, then it gets better. Wager matches are a tense, exciting and potentially incredibly frustrating new addition that come in four delicious six-player flavours (see Wagering War boxout). At one point during our chat with Dan Bunting, everyone playing the game at the opposite end of the room starts screaming and shouting at once, which prompts Bunting to smile sagely and say, "You can tell they're playing Wager matches – they get louder." Indeed they do, and that's when they're gambling with a large float of Currency pre-provided by Treyarch as opposed to their own cyber-cash, hard-fought-for and ➤

"WE JUST DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF WHAT A NUKE DOES TO THE GAMEPLAY"

- DAN BUNTING, TREYARCH

ULTIMATE DISTRACTION

THE NEW DECOY grenade perfectly exemplifies how the creative freedom of a semi-fictional setting complements thoughtful game design in *Black Ops*. Dan Bunting explains how it came to be...

STAGE 1 THE IDEA

"The idea came out of a gameplay need. I was playing one day and I realised I get killed because I'm looking at the mini-map so much sometimes and I would love to have the ability to throw a fake red dot on the mini-map to distract somebody."

STAGE 2 THE FICTION

"We went to John Plaster – our SOG and Vietnam military advisor – and he told us about this thing that they called the 'Nightingale' in Vietnam where they'd bundle up fireworks around some foil and chicken wire and they would throw that out in the jungle and it would emulate gunfire sounds. The VC would be attracted to the sounds, and they would ambush them from behind."

STAGE 3 THE IN-GAME DESIGN

"So that's a perfect fit. Let's create the Nightingale with a decoy grenade. The look and the shape of it is artistic licence but it's inspired by some of the images John Plaster gave us of how the Nightingale was constructed."

STAGE 4 HOW IT WORKS

"Once you throw it in the air it starts firing, so you get some movement to the red dot, and then once it hits the ground it'll pop and it'll bounce around, then it'll stop for a second, then go into another phase where it pops. So it emulates the player firing his gun and moving locations."



WAGERING WAR

Wager matches explained in-depth

ONE IN THE CHAMBER

Each player has three lives and is armed with only a pistol and a melee knife, both of which kill with one hit. The pistol is loaded with just one bullet, but each kill will be rewarded with an extra bullet.

► **TREYARCH SAYS:** "It's probably the purest game mode that we have, and it's incredibly tense because of that, and because the risk of loss is so great."

► **PLAY SAYS:** Our favourite Wager mode for sure because it's very psychological and feels totally different to a regular match. The setup is very simple, but there's a lot of depth and a lot of nuances when it comes to actually playing it.

STICKS AND STONES

Each player gets a crossbow with three explosive darts, a ballistic knife and a tomahawk. Kills with the crossbow or ballistic knife score 100 points, melee kills score 25, tomahawk kills score nothing but reset the victim's points to 0.

► **TREYARCH SAYS:** "This is probably one of the most terrifyingly frustrating modes – there's epic tension. But it's really satisfying. It's not like a bad frustration, it's 'I want to go back in there and play that again because I want to redeem myself.'"

► **PLAY SAYS:** This is like a long-distance running race – taking an early lead is asking for punishment. The smart strategy is to stay on the pace 'til the final moments then make a break for the lead.

GUN GAME

Starting with a pistol and ending with a ballistic knife, the winner is the first player to get a kill with every one of a set sequence of 20 weapons. Each kill advances you to the next weapon, but falling victim to a melee sets you back one.

► **TREYARCH SAYS:** "It's one of those that's geared towards staying on the move because you don't want to sit in one place for too long. If somebody melees you... you just do not want to get meleed. It's just so demoralising because you've worked so hard to get out of that category."

► **PLAY SAYS:** This mode teaches you the hard way how to use every weapon type in the game. There are frustrating choke points on weapons that aren't so easy to get kills with, but it is very, very fair and natural all-rounders will find a very lucrative home here.

SHARPSHOOTER

Every player gets the same randomly generated weapon for a 45-second period whereupon a new weapon is randomly generated for everyone, then another after 45 seconds, and so on...

► **TREYARCH SAYS:** "It's a game mode designed to give everybody an even playing field. [The cycling of random weapons] keeps it interesting throughout the course of the game."

► **PLAY SAYS:** Another mode well-suited to all-rounders and the Wager mode that feels most like a true gamble, given its random, unpredictable nature. Not necessarily the most fun to play, but definitely the best suited to betting.



► agonising to lose. There are three tiers of Wager matches, with increasingly high stakes, and we imagine trash talk will get more bitter and more resentful the higher up you go. The bottom tier will allow friends to play together for very small bets but, to prevent match fixing, friends won't be allowed to play together in the other two. All four Wager match types are free-for-all, which is a bonus if you're a 'lone wolf' looking for something a bit different, and all four are a lot of fun. Well balanced, but purposely designed so that this balance *can* be dramatically toppled one way or another. Like any good gambling sport, luck and unpredictability play a large part.

One thing that won't play a large part in *Black Ops*' multiplayer is cheating. Bunting admits that foul play, whether it be the exploitation of glitches or boosting for XP has "diminished the reputation of the franchise in a lot of people's eyes", but insists that anti-cheating measures in *Black Ops* will be the most stringent the *COD* series has ever seen.

"We have a lot of anti-cheating, anti-boosting stuff going on behind the scenes, so we are monitoring that," Bunting assures us. "We're going to have a very heavy hand in the online security of our game. We're taking it really seriously. We had an engineer dedicated pretty much from the start of the project to it – we're doing a lot of stuff under the hood that people don't know about to check for exploits and hacks and glitches. If people hack their hardware, we've got the ability to detect that and report them to Sony. People who are just exploiting our game – we're monitoring that too through code that's running. We also have the

ability for users to report other users for abuse in-game. Because of the films feature we can go back and look at their games to get proof that they've been cheating. We can either ban them for a period of time or indefinitely."

With measures like these in place, Treyarch *should* be able to keep on top of any cheating. But we can't expect a completely clean game every time, neither should we blame Treyarch for that. With a game as popular as *COD* and with the internet making it so easy for cheating methods to be shared around, the battle against cheats is one that sadly won't ever end.

"Primarily we're looking for people that just completely ruin the online experience because that's what becomes widespread," says Bunting. "With the popularity of YouTube it's really exploded the copycat phenomenon where people will find an exploit, take a video and show everybody, and everybody tries to copy it. So that's the kind of thing we're trying to prevent."

On top of the major new additions of Theater and Wager modes, there's a whole bunch of

smaller new features to get excited about. Treyarch has had a lot of fun coming up with equipment and Perks to go with its Cold War setting, and Bunting is frank about the benefits of focusing on operatives known for using prototype and custom-built gear.

"Yeah, you can get away with [anything]," he chuckles. "It's been awesome. The era has opened up a lot of creativity for us. We've been working in World War II for a long time, which is very limiting in terms of what was available and feels authentic. We're not going for realism,

POTENTIALLY AGENUINE MODERN WARFARE 2 BEATER





● You can go along the cliff paths, but there's not much action there.



but we are going for believability because at the end of the day the game has to be fun and entertaining. What's important is that things feel authentic, that it feels like something that could have been real, and it's a great device having the black ops guys who could use a lot of stuff that was classified or home-made or modified or whatever. It's been a huge benefit."

Check the Ultimate Destruction box for an example of how this open creative process has worked. The Decoy is one of several new pieces of equipment to try out. Others include the RC XD, a three-kill Killstreak that gives you a remote-control buggy strapped with explosives that can be detonated at the touch of a button. People were getting a lot of kills with it at first, but soon everyone learned to recognise the sound of its motor and were ready to shoot it as soon as it appeared.

Another remote gadget at your disposal is the remote camera, which comes under the category of Equipment, which explosives don't by the way, because you get something from each of three categories – Lethal, Tactical and Equipment – where *Modern Warfare 2* has just two – Equipment and Special Grenade. The remote camera can be set up anywhere and its monochrome thermal view displayed in place of your mini-map – you can switch back and forth between the two, should you wish. Very useful for keeping an eye on flaking routes.

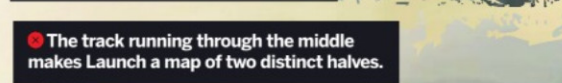
Other new toys include a flame-thrower, a TV guided rocket launcher, an anti-air sentry turret, a napalm strike, a mortar team, a motion sensor – which you plant in the ground for a UAV-type scan covering a limited radius – a Blackbird – which gives more detailed, accurate recon than a regular spy plane – and a Gunship, which is *Call Of Duty's* first ever fully pilotable ➤



● The spy cam is especially effective against players who go up to shiny things, going "Coo, what's that?"



● You can have your clan tag and emblem displayed on your weapon. Like this, look.



● The track running through the middle makes Launch a map of two distinct halves.



PUSHES THE FRANCHISE INTO NEW TERRITORY IN NUMEROUS WAYS WITH A CONFIDENCE AND SKILL WE HONESTLY DIDN'T EXPECT

➤ Killstreak. And did we also mention that there's a Combat Training mode where you can practise against bots on your own or with friends? Or that most levels now have some kind of interactive, layout-changing feature, such as a huge rocket that launches? That your Perk 1 choice affects the overall appearance of your character? That you can customise your face camo and the appearance of your weapon reticles? That your match report now details a variety of personal bests you might have achieved and stores them in your Player Profile? That you can now dive to prone by holding **○** while sprinting? That sectors of each map are now marked with grid references to make it easier to communicate locations to your team-mates? No? Oh, well we did now.

With all these new features getting stuffed in, you'd think that something would have to give, and you'd be right – Treyarch has removed a number of existing features. This is less to do with space limitations, though, and more to do with certain features being unpopular or not working too well. As Bunting explains, pruning existing ideas is a tricky but necessary process.

"Typically we start with all the most common complaints from the community," he tells us. "What's the thing that people hate the most? We start with like a top five things people hate the most and analyse those and understand why they hate them and what doesn't work about them. And if it just doesn't work, we just pull it out – if there's nothing salvageable. If there's a good idea in there, but it's not quite right, we try to find a way to make it better or improve it for the users who don't like it. A lot of it's just our gut instinct, too. We play a lot of games, we play a lot of multiplayer and we'll find things that we don't like and then we'll test our assumptions against what the community doesn't like and if the thing we don't like, they don't like then it's pretty much a no-brainer."

Of course, the reason somebody doesn't like a feature is usually that somebody else likes

it too much, so somebody somewhere will be shedding tears over the loss of such features as Painkiller, Stopping Power, Deathstreaks, Accomplishments and the Tactical Nuke.

"We just don't like the idea of what a nuke does to the gameplay," smiles Bunting, aware of the irony of omitting such a weapon from a game about the Cold War. "It encourages exploitation and it's just generally not fun. We talked about it, like it still might be cool to have the idea of a nuke. But ultimately we just felt like, there's so much that explodes in our game, we want to kind of bring it back a little bit more towards a pure level where people feel like they're having actually competition, and not these kind of weird, extraneous circumstances that just suddenly end the game for them. We want to actually make it feel like they're competing and that you can actually defend yourself."

Wise words. We won't miss nukes and we won't miss seeing PSN ID cards marked with the number of nukes a player has used and, despite the fact we use one or two of them ourselves, we can see why other features have got the chop and don't think we'll miss them much either. Stopping Power, for example, always felt like a competitive necessity rather than a stylistic choice and we welcome the levelling effect of getting rid of it.

The real test for *Call Of Duty: Black Ops'* multiplayer will, of course, come when it's released into the wild and its resistance to annoying, exploitative behaviour is put under strain. But played with other journalists and a handful of Treyarch staff it is brilliant – easily the best multiplayer mode yet in a Treyarch *COD* title and potentially a genuine *Modern Warfare 2* beater. Instead of simply emulating the work of their Infinity Ward counterparts, the multiplayer team at Treyarch has refined it, trimming excess fat where necessary, and added to it substantially with ideas Infinity Ward will now *have* to take note of.



● The RC XD can be very punishing against enemy teams who bunch together.





MAPPY NOW?

We've played three of the 14 maps



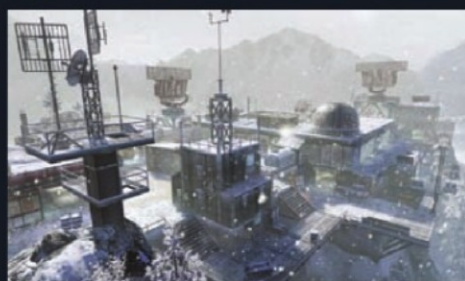
LAUNCH

THIS IS A launch site for a large rocket that, at some point during every match, will take off, leaving anyone standing underneath at the time burned to a crisp. Tall towers at each side of the rocket provide great vantage points for snipers and numerous buildings, containers and equipment littering the rest of the site provide good cover for everyone else.



RADIATION

THIS OLD POWER station features a long open area with a large building on one side and a high platform on the other. There's a tunnel running along underneath the open area with a large trap door (that can be opened or closed using a switch some distance away) in a gap linking the centre of the tunnel to the outside world above.



SUMMIT

A NARROW MAP with severe drops on all sides. Summit features plenty of variety when it comes to buildings and platforms. The interior of one large building in the middle is the most open area on the Summit map, with most of it made up of narrow gaps and pathways. It's a great map if you like hiding in nooks and crannies.



● These computers beep a lot, which made us really jumpy.



Skewer

● The ballistic knife shoots a blade out of the handle, which is blatantly cooler than throwing it.



● It's a sheer drop through that trap door so he didn't just walk out of it.



● There are many routes in and out of the central building on Summit.



PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



STONE COLD STUNNER

Joscelyn for position

There was a time when a new *Bond* release could afford to hire a separate *Bond* girl and *Bond* theme singer, but the recession has hit 007 hard and cuts have had to be made. In order to save money, one individual with all qualities of both Shirley Bassey and Ursula Andress has been found, namely Joss Stone. She can sing *and* she looks fantastic sitting on a car. So yes, Joss sings the theme song, *I'll Take It All*, and appears in the game itself as Bond's latest love interest, Nicole Hunter.



● Daniel Craig has kept himself busy by lending his likeness and voice to *Blood Stone*.



RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

James Bond 007: Blood Stone

Bonded by blood



If ever you needed the shift in power between movies and games summed up in one neat little capsule, then the two events that occurred in the *James Bond* universe within two weeks of each other in July of this year are it. First, MGM announces that production of the 23rd *Bond* movie has been put on hold due to a cash crisis. Then, a fortnight later Activision swaggers up, tosses MGM 10p for a cup of tea and announces *James Bond 007: Blood Stone*. Oh, how the tables have turned.

So yes, the new *Bond* game doesn't need a new *Bond* movie to give it a leg up. Like several other *Bond* games before it, *Blood Stone* is an original *Bond* adventure, designed specifically to be a game. Of those previous non-tie-in *Bond* games, *Blood Stone* is most reminiscent of *Everything Or Nothing* in that it features the voice and likeness of the current *Bond* actor, plus its own new *Bond* girl and loads of proper *Bond* stuff that makes it feel like an interactive movie, as opposed to a cynical knock-off. We're looking at you *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*.

Daniel Craig and Dame Judi Dench – who are both presumably at a bit of a loose end at the moment – lend their

likenesses and voices and singer/actress Joss Stone maintains that singer/actress balance by both singing and acting. The theme song, *I'll Take It All*, is a collaboration between Joss and Dave Stewart from The Eurythmics, a band from the Eighties that your dad probably loves. If not then your mum.

We've seen the beginning of the game and it is a lot like the beginning of a *Bond* movie, if a little longer and more stretched out, what with the whole thing lasting about six hours or more. Like a traditional *Bond* movie opening, you're put straight into the action. Some nasty bugger called Greco is about to crash a yacht full of explosives into the venue of an important political summit in Athens and Bond has to stop him in the only way he knows how – by parachuting in and making the rest up as he goes along.

Landing on the deck of the yacht, Bond sets about beating up on some henchmen. You can shoot them if you like, but Bizarre Creations wants *Blood Stone* to re-create the up-close, gritty feel of the new Daniel Craig *Bond*, so you're best off dishing out some punchy, kicky pain because that kind of carry on is what fills up your Focus Aim meter. When you spend Focus Aim,

you basically get a free headshot on an enemy of your choice.

Anyway, Bond eventually finds Greco, but he karate chops Bond and gets in a helicopter with a big machine gun on it. He shoots at Bond, but succeeds only in making a right mess of his own boat. Next thing you know, Greco's in a speedboat and has a rocket launcher. Bond leaps to another speedboat nearby just as Greco destroys the yacht completely and a chase ensues. There's shooting, there's explosions, there's hench-death, then Bond crashes his boat into a restaurant. There he finds Greco, who he interrogates as to the whereabouts of the bomb. A car is heard screeching away outside – that'll be the bomb then. Another chase ensues, this time in cars. Bond rams the car carrying the bomb, which flips and explodes. All this before the opening credits, complete with silky silhouette sequence, roll.

Is it an in-depth, core gaming experience? Maybe not. But as far as traditional *Bond*, action-entertainment values go, it's full marks so far.

James Bond 007: Blood Stone is being developed by Bizarre Creations. Check the website for more details: www.bizarrecreations.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

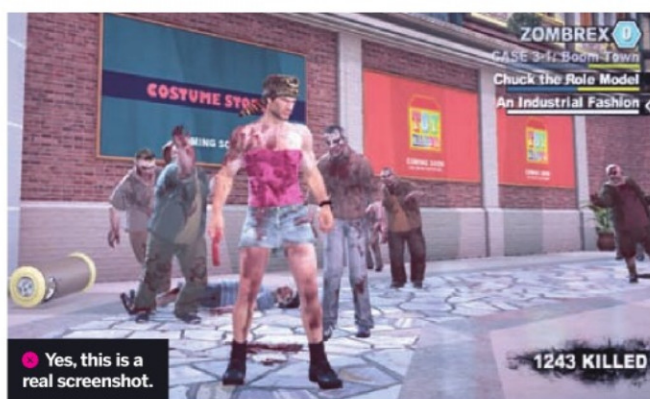
- It's not tied directly to a film, so has been afforded plenty of development time.
- A *Bond* game with a reputable development team at the helm.
- This'll be your only *Bond* fix for a while since the new movie got canned.
- Has the cast, screenwriter, *Bond* girl and theme song of a *Bond* movie.

READ ME

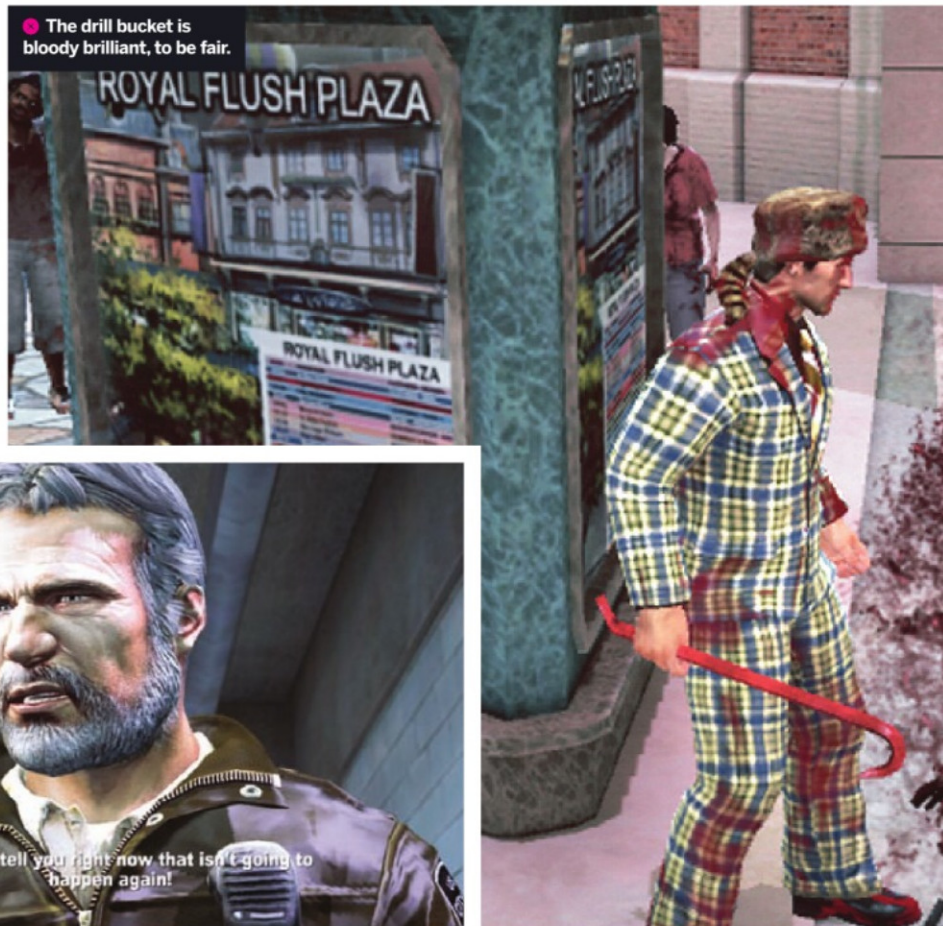
Cinematic action *Bond* game based on an original story that was penned by established *James Bond* screenwriter, Bruce Feirstein.

● Interestingly, they've decided not to render her nose ring.

PREVIEW



● The drill bucket is bloody brilliant, to be fair.



DUCT TAPE IS USEFUL

When is a Hail Mary not a Hail Mary?

DEAD RISING 2 is all about combos – a machete strapped to a broom, chainsaws on a paddle, nails in a bat and many other brutal and hilarious weapons can be manufactured with the sole intent of destroying the zombie hordes. See our handy example here for an... example.



● It's the fishing hat that makes this, really.



● Guess what happened next.





RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Dead Rising 2

What do you get when you cross a zombie with a chainsaw? A lot of fun

PS3

While PS3 owners couldn't play the original *Dead Rising* – unless they had a 360, of course – it can never have been too hard for the non-players to grasp the concept. Namely: you are trapped in the midst of a zombie outbreak and must survive a few days until you are rescued. It still isn't hard to work out that this is the premise behind *Dead Rising 2*, the sequel that both is coming to PS3 and is something we've had an extensive playtest of. So grab the nearest sharp object and join us as we wade knee deep in the dead.

The first thing that should be made clear about our time with *Dead Rising 2* is that it felt very familiar to our time with the original game. Animations and controls have been sharpened up somewhat, but general mechanics and laws within the game remain the same as before – while you are almost constantly surrounded by zombies, your one main enemy is time. Missions pop up regularly and – should you choose to bother with them – have to be started before a time limit is up. This is as well as the overriding twosome; both that the military will arrive to rescue you in three days and that your daughter needs a shot of Zombrex every 24 hours to stop her from becoming one of the undead.

Daughter? Why yes, it seems another change from the original game has been to introduce a lead character who can actually garner some sympathy from players. Unlike Frank West, Chuck Greene isn't a knobhead. It's a small change, but one sure to make the character resonate more with those completely turned off by the massive-chinned photojournalist from last time out.

Oh yes – the game. *Dead Rising 2* pits players against legions of the undead, forcing you to run, jump, kick, punch, flail, stab, twist, shoot, drive, firework (not a verb), saw, jump-kick, paddle-saw and dozens of other things your way through thousands of zombies. Chuck, his daughter and a number of other survivors are trapped in the midst of this nightmare and it is up to the player to sort things out via a series of different 'cases' (or 'missions'). In-between these tasks – and in-between getting the Zombrex for your daughter – are numerous side-missions where Chuck can go and

rescue survivors left out in the open, in order to pick up more valuable PP (Prestige Points), which allow him to level up and acquire more abilities as the game progresses.

What we saw in our playtime was things like increased speed, a larger inventory and some special attacks, like a jumping kick. It's this part of the game that is totally up to the player whether they take part in or not, and while missing out on these missions means less rewards, less survivors and (presumably) a worse ending, you're never forced into taking part unless they're integral to progressing the plot. It's a system that works well and takes more influence from the Wii port of *Dead Rising: Chop Til You Drop* than the original 360 game. It's something we'll really have to pay attention to in our review, however, as the deeply sandboxy nature of *Dead Rising 2* could easily put off players who are more accustomed to, or just prefer, stricter boundaries. Though we are hard-pressed to think of anyone who would turn down the opportunity to

ride a motorbike with two chainsaws strapped to the front of it through a crowd of zombies. Well, we can think of some people, but they're idiots.

We're not ready to offer a definitive verdict on *Dead Rising 2* just yet, and the version we played wasn't actually ready to let us give a definitive verdict. Still, it's safe to say this is very likely to appeal to those who lapped up the original game. It'll be a harder sell on those who never got on board with Frank's zombie massacring as besides a few nips, tucks and tweaks across the board this is generally the same thing as it was four years ago. We haven't seen enough of the boss battles to know if they're all as infuriating as they were before, mind, and this was a point that put a lot of people off the original. As for those of you who have never touched a *Dead Rising* title? It's too hard to call right now. Give us until we've played it through another few times for review, will you?

Dead Rising 2 is being developed by Blue Castle Games and Capcom. Check out <http://bit.ly/9iqWjN> for details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ We missed out first time around – not this time, though.
- ❑ Hundreds of zombies on screen at any one time to slaughter.
- ❑ Weapon combinations are imaginative, useful and funny.
- ❑ The lead character isn't a complete and total berk.

READ ME

Dead Rising 2 eschews the more modern take on zombies being nimble and showing basic intelligence, opting instead for mindless, shambling cannon fodder.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Rage

Foreboding, desolate, but oh-so silky smooth

PS3 I've heard a lot about *Rage*, but it leaves me cold. Isn't it just more post-apocalyptic first-person nonsense? Haven't we covered this all with *Borderlands*?

Oh, you poor fool. Do you not see? This is no mere *Borderlands*-alike – not that this would be a bad thing – but it is so much more than that. A huge, full world to explore on foot and in your vehicle; beautiful, beautiful visuals; the ability to pretend that you're playing *Mad Max: The Game*. Its wonders should not be understated.

You've told me this before. I really don't see why I should care.

We were just giving you the requisite background detail, child. You should care as we have been blessed with the opportunity to see more of the game and in greater detail, and what we have seen – oh, it is good.

Rage is no mere *Borderlands*-alike. Its wonders should not be understated

Good how, exactly?

Good as in it runs in a particularly heavenly fashion, with a frame rate not dropping below the 60fps mark. All the while it looks stunning, with no loading screens and the whole world open for players to explore. Though not all from the beginning – id doesn't want the scale of it to overwhelm players.

Well that sounds better, but how can I trust you?

Aside from the fact that this is *Play* magazine – the most trustworthy thing in both this life and the afterlife – *Rage* walked away from E3 with three Game Critics Awards: Best Console Game, Best Action Game and an award created specifically for the game – Special Commendation For Graphics. It isn't just our opinion that this could be something very special; it's a view shared by most people who've seen the game in action.

I've been led to believe that the game is a mish-mash of first-person shooter and driving combat game. How are the developers making it so these elements work well together? How can they be sure that everything plays well?

Where did you hear that it's a mix? Hmm? *HMM?*

I read it in *Play*.

Oh. All right then. You are saved from damnation. Anyway, on one hand we have the first-person aspect of *Rage*. In it you will see a game like you have seen before – run about, shoot, strafe, decapitate with throwing blades. The developer isn't shy of the fact that this isn't innovative. But then this is id, super-developer and legend in the

field – the kind of name attached to a product that should make it an insta-buy before you even know anything about it. It's good to see, then, that what we've been shown of the game looks really bloody good fun.

And the driving?

We're getting to that. Did you interrupt us to make a break in this text?

Maybe.

The driving and shooting go hand-in-hand, with both transitioning smoothly from one to the other. We thought there might be different areas for cars and people, but this just isn't the case. Players instantly jump into and out of vehicles, tearing up the terrain, racing, and blowing each other up.

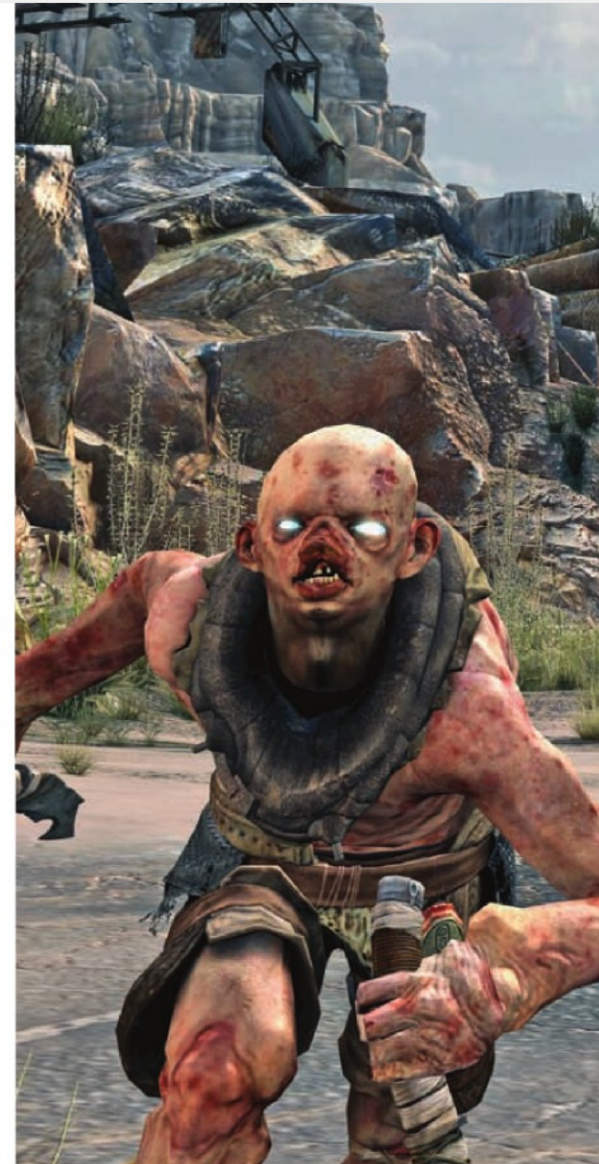
You say the world is huge – does this mean that there will be protracted sequences of boring, long-winded driving?

Are you Doubting Thomas in disguise? This is still id we're talking about – and id likes action. We have been promised by the developer that there will always be action waiting for you whether you're driving around, lurking underground in a mutant lair, or simply wandering the streets of a settlement.

So I should be excited?

For it is written, so shall it be.

Rage is being developed by id Software. Check out www.rage.com for more details.



● Throwing a triple-edged boomerang at Union Jack Man and Captain America. Yesterday.

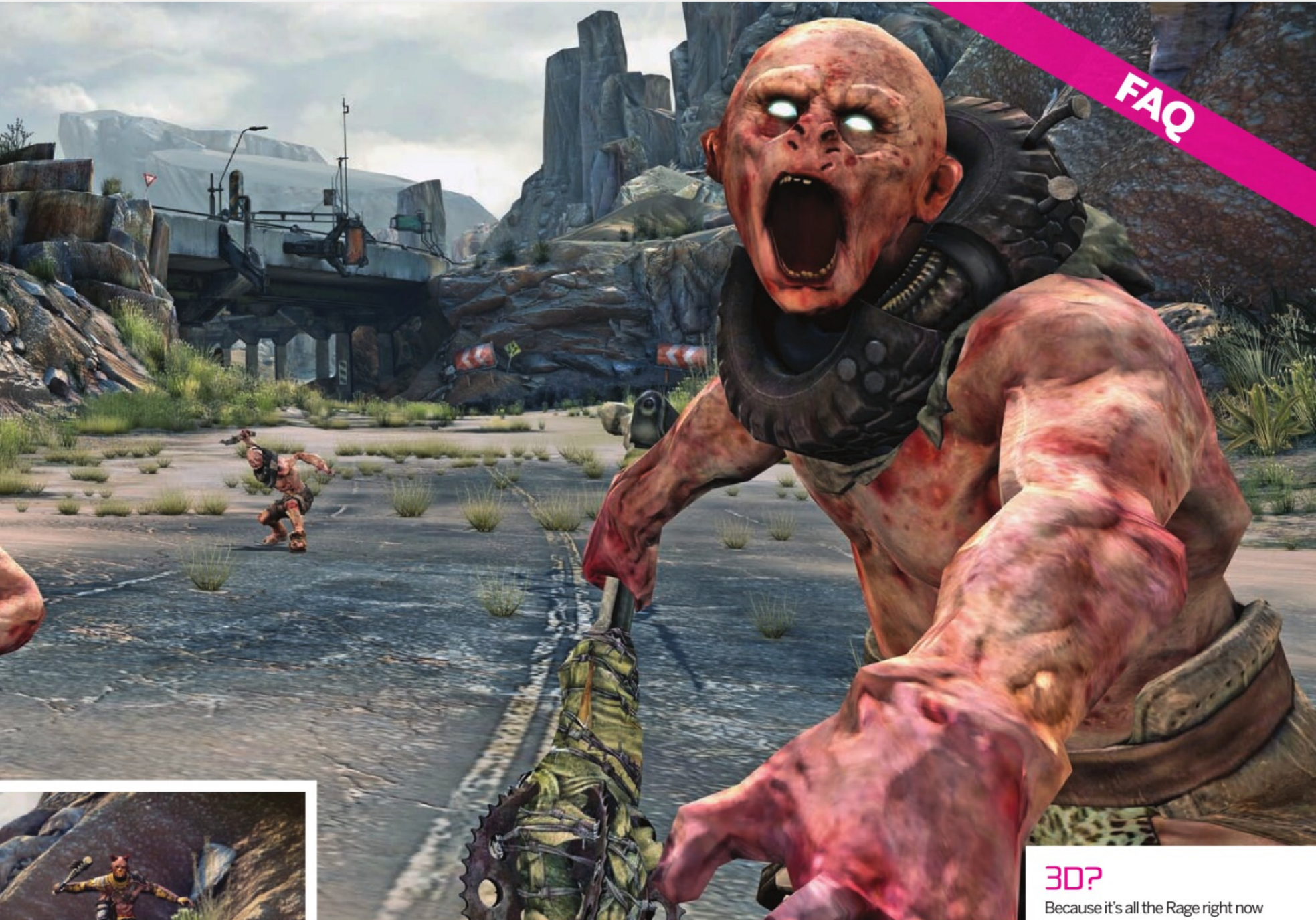
● The enemies lurking throughout the world certainly look as dangerous as they should.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's been said numerous times, but *Rage* does look amazing.
- Live out all your *Mad Max* fantasies. Or just shoot people.
- Runs at a constant 60 frames per second, for those of you who care.
- Anything John Carmack is involved in makes us happy.

READ ME

Not one of our lot who saw *Rage* at E3 – or at any other event, for that matter – has anything bad to say about it. It's going to be special.



● Fashion of the future still bewildered the older generation.



● You do get to play this game, and it looks like something out of *Star Wars*.



● This may well be the first time we've seen appropriate armour in a game.

3D?

Because it's all the Rage right now FOR ALL THE talk of *Rage*'s technical merit – John Carmack behind it, the megatextures, the open world, 60 frames per second, the sheer beauty of it all – we haven't heard anything about 3D. And you know what? That's absolutely fine by us. We want id to make *Rage* the best it can without wasting time on frivolous extras.

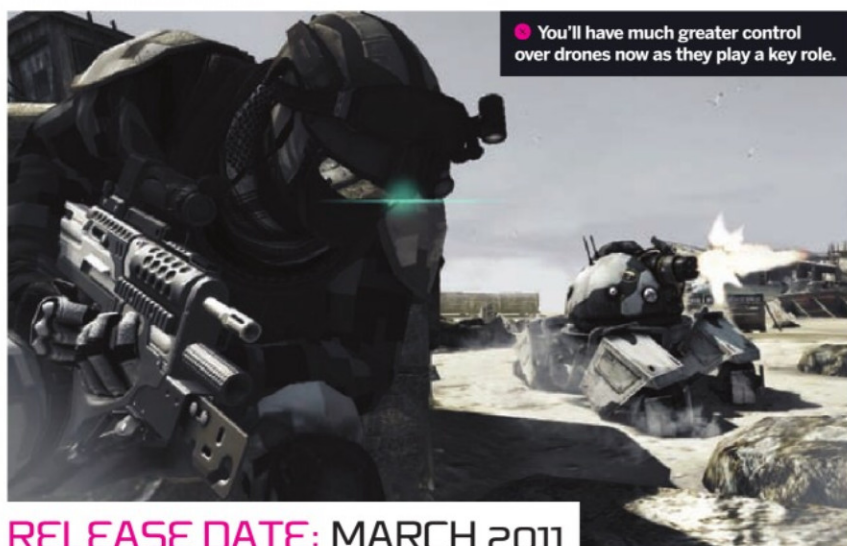


● Traffic wardens: pushy.

PREVIEW



● Mission objectives for the Ghosts can change on the fly if a target is spotted.



● You'll have much greater control over drones now as they play a key role.



● You can update your HUD with new info as it's networked to your squad, too.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

This is no time to get spooked

PS3 The Tom Clancy stable really seems to be coming into its own at the moment. We may have missed out on *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, but *Ghost Recon* is clearly taking its lead from the Sam Fisher reboot. This is a whole new breed of shooter Ubisoft is putting together, turning stealth gaming on its head and reshaping what we understand of squad shooters. Seriously, this is a game to be paying some attention to.

The first thing we noticed about *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* is the proximity of the fighting that takes place. *Ghost Recon* used to be about combining technology with tactics and cover to pin down terrorists in Mexican deserts. Now you're using technology to get up close and personal with enemies on European beaches, getting close kills and catching your targets in squad crossfire. This is *Ghost Recon* simultaneously stripped back and amped up again and, we must say, the combination is looking pretty good.

The most notable addition is the much-talked-about Optical Camo suits the Ghosts will be sporting. Some have been a little quick to judge this move, perhaps thinking of the suit as being similar to those they've seen in movies such as *Predator* or *Ghost In The Shell*, but this is different. For starters Ubisoft is playing with the idea of it being battery charged so its use will be limited. It has already made it so firing your gun makes it switch off momentarily. This means that rather than allowing you to shoot people at will, the Camo suit is better suited to getting up close to your targets and getting a quick, quiet kill.

Some gameplay we saw on a northern European beach saw the Ghosts enter a hostile camp in preparation for a full armed assault. All four were camouflaged, but after scanning the area they were warned that a priority target was in the area. This became priority number one before aiding the arriving troops. The team then proceeded to take out

guards, without prompting from the player, guiding you ever closer to your man. Having finally snuck around and incapacitated the guards and gunmen, the target was in sight, but flanked by comrades. Suddenly laser

And surely that's the point. This interpretation of *Ghost Recon* seems even closer to the true nature of what this work would seem to be about than *Advance Warfighter* ever was and the Camo suit really makes a lot of sense

This is *Ghost Recon* simultaneously stripped back and amped up again and the combination is looking pretty good

sights appeared on the HUD showing that these men were in the sights of the other Ghosts ready to be taken down. Then on a count of three the henchmen were dropped and the target apprehended to be picked up once the ground forces arrived. It was like the Ghosts had never been there.

in that context. The old gameplay mechanics of cover shooting and squad thinking remain, but they make up only a portion of the action. Your squad looks after itself rather than taking commands, but with full four-player co-op an option you could always boss your friends around a little. As for cover,

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A brand-new theatre of battle in Europe, although globetrotting has been promised.
- Fancy new gadgets and toys for you to play with that open up the conflict.

- Close-quarter takedowns that make for quick and satisfying attacks.
- Four-player co-op, which promises to be a lot of fun provided you have a headset.



Q&A

Aziz Khater, international product manager, *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*

The Ghosts seem to get a lot closer to their targets in *Future Soldier* – was that gameplay shift important?

Yes. The first thing that we tried to do was to make the game much more battlefield-oriented than the previous one. Our consumers told us that it's much more fun to shoot people than to gather intel. That's why we tried to have the distance of combat closer.

Do you think people have been quick to judge the Optical Camouflage?

Yes. But it's something we can understand. Some people think that it will be too easy, you'll just have to activate your Optical Camo and run, but that won't be the case. For the purposes of the demo we had to remove some constraints, but this is a prototype, so even in the game it will not be 100 per cent infallible. Running too fast, explosions will cause interference and maybe you'll have to deal with some sort of battery. So, lots of constraints. And enemies will be armed with countermeasures, such as EMP grenades, so Optical Camo is not the ultimate tool.

Will we see those countermeasures in the multiplayer?

Indeed. In multiplayer these are things you'll have to use – don't think you're just going to activate your Optical Camo, hide somewhere and shoot everything. For every device there will be countermeasures, so it'll be perfectly balanced.

destructible cover that really seems to disintegrate under heavy fire means you'll need to be much more mobile than in the *GRAV* games.

So as things stand *Future Soldier* is actually looking like a top-notch shooter as well as a really interesting new take on the *Ghost Recon* franchise. Any concerns we may have had about how new technology within the game would be integrated have been put to bed for now. Ubisoft seems to have a really good idea of what it's doing and is paying a great deal of attention to fans to make sure it keeps on track with what they want.

Ubisoft Paris simply won't let anyone else touch *Ghost Recon* so it remains in charge thank goodness. Check out ghostrecon.uk.ubi.com for updates.

READ ME

Although *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* has now been pushed back into 2011, Ubisoft Paris is still preparing a multiplayer beta very soon. We'll give you more info when we have it.

● Taking out this helicopter means a big explosion and one less vehicle to worry about.



● Your job is to clear the path for regular troops, which includes thinning out enemy numbers.





RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

Trying not to stand out in the crowd



As a single-player experience, we've pretty much settled on the feeling that *Brotherhood* is something to be excited about. We shared the concerns of some fans that this wouldn't be a full game, but seeing some of the improvements to combat, social aspects and set pieces has put those fears to rest. *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* is looking like a worthy successor to last year's game, but that means the spotlight must move to the multiplayer.

We recently got some hands-on time with the Wanted mode, which best exemplifies the way in which *Assassin's Creed* is attempting to meld itself with traditional multiplayer gaming. It's more or less a deathmatch mode, but the twist is that you're given one target and are being marked by another player. You begin by picking your avatar from a selection of 12. These are all generic characters and the map will be populated by identical models to make it harder to find your target.

For instance, if you choose to play as a monk you'll see plenty of other

monks around who look identical to you. To find your target you'll need to keep an eye out for unusual behaviour such as doctors running around on rooftops or courtesans changing direction suddenly. You do have a circle beneath your feet that points you in the direction of your target, but it gets wider the closer you get so it's harder to pick them out. However, if you're looking for an executioner and there's only one surrounded by bankers, you can be fairly sure who you're after.

We found this mode to be a little mixed. On one hand, playing it cool and attempting to keep yourself inconspicuous can be interesting, but a little slow. On the other hand, being aggressive is a sure way of getting spotted and killed. We can see how with time and experience it could become great to play, but we're either going to need to get a whole lot better at it or find some better opponents to get the best out of it.

Ubisoft Montreal remains at the helm of *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*. There's plenty to be found at assassinscreed.uk.ubi.com/brotherhood.



KNOW YOUR LOADOUT

Our favourite special moves

BEFORE STARTING A multiplayer match and after picking your avatar, you'll be asked to pick a loadout of special moves. We stuck with the disguise and gun combo, which allowed us to switch our avatar at any time and kill our target from range. However, using either skill in plain view was risky, as it immediately gave us away to the other assassins.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An interesting new twist on multiplayer deathmatch that could be a winner.
- A whole new story involving *AC II*'s hero, Ezio, and his rise as an Assassin.
- Pick, train and command your own army of assassins through the game.
- *Brotherhood* features another amazingly detailed world based on Rome.

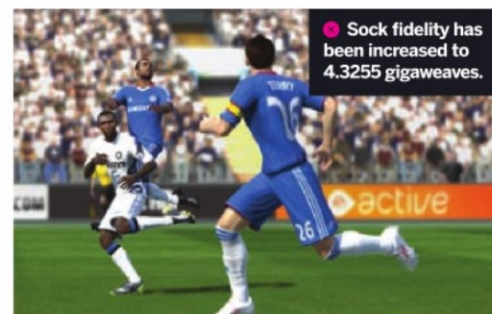
READ ME

You're actually playing as Templar trainees in this multiplayer in a fictional construct, a bit like the loading worlds from the *Matrix* series.

HANDS-ON



Physical interaction has been ramped up. It's very handsy.



Sock fidelity has been increased to 4.3255 gigaweaves.

EA knew how the Fabregas saga would end all along.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

FIFA 11

Now with added personality

PS3

A new FIFA title brings with it familiar feelings. Annoyance that there's yet another game – FIFA 10 was good enough, surely? Confusion about what's actually new this year – so Wayne Rooney looks more like an ogre than ever? And a pervading sense of apathy about the whole thing – FIFA again? Oh.

But every time these thoughts and feelings come about they are eliminated once we've played the game, as EA Canada's footballing behemoth has been easily the best kickball game available over the last few years. The thing is, this time around there are some noticeable changes, and they're enough to make us think that FIFA 10 was more of a stop-gap than we thought.

One of the main additions is the increase in physical conflicts between players. Whereas last time around they would simply shoulder-barge each other, this time there's a full 360 degrees of combative play. The likes of Carlos Tevez will quickly and carefully shield the ball from opposing defenders, switching the foot they're controlling with

and using their strength to a visible, tangible advantage. But that's not to say defenders have the short straw in this deal, with pressing and tackling improved in certain technical manners, which you won't actually be able to see while playing – just trust us, they're there. This all comes down to the new buzzword for FIFA 11: Personality+.

We're assured that this is more than a gimmick, and rather than just reflecting the different appearances and movement styles of players, it accurately represents exactly how they play. In our time with the game it was clear to see that things like passing had been improved – the ability to play a ball pretty much wherever you want is a great addition – and skilful players can make defence-splitting runs on the ball. But as for Personality+ being anything more than a fancy name for 'good players are good, bad players are bad'? We're not sure. Regardless, we had fun with the game and it looks to have some nice new touches.

FIFA 11 is being developed by EA Canada. Check out www.fifa.easports.com for more details.



Referees will hopefully not stand around like idiots IN THE WAY, as they used to.



DREAM JOB

And no Career Development Loan in sight

MANAGER MODE AND Be A Pro are dead; long live Career mode. Taking the place of the old, separate modes is this consolidated new offering, allowing players to be a manager, a player or a player-manager over the course of 15 seasons. We're promised refined and rebuilt management systems with more functionality and stability, which all sounds very good.



Drogba can use his ridiculous strength even more than he used to, which is nice.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Shielding the ball means even slow players can bring something to the team.
- Personality+ is promising to be more than just a gimmick, possibly.
- The ability to dribble and keep close control is extremely important.
- The Italian league doesn't have a single five-star team in our preview code.

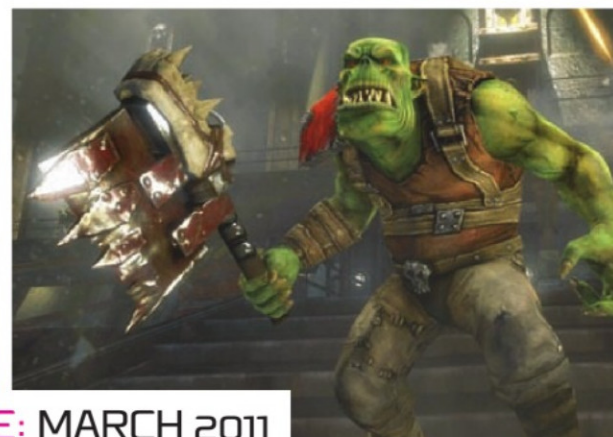
READ ME

Wayne Rooney has been on the cover of the last five main FIFA series titles. What's the betting he's on the cover of this one too? He is? Oh...

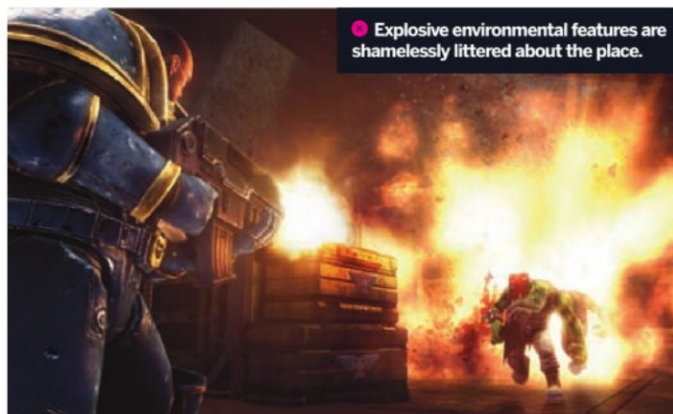
PREVIEW



Special weapons like the heavy Bolter can be picked up, but tend to get used up pretty fast.



Is there co-op in *Space Marine*? Let's just say it looks very likely.



Explosive environmental features are shamelessly littered about the place.

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

Kill the orks, slay the orks, destroy the orks!

PS3

Games Workshop videogames have a long and mostly decent history, but of all the different types of game based on all the different strands of Games Workshop's empire, only one series has really stood out strongly enough to attract a separate fan base all its own: *Dawn Of War*.

Relic Entertainment's RTS based on the futuristic *Warhammer 40K* universe has become one of the most respected strategy brands for the PC on its own merits. There's overlap between *Dawn Of War*'s audience and Games Workshop's traditional clientele, but they're far from one and the same thing.

So we think it's fair to say that Relic has earned the right to broaden its horizons and do something different with the *Warhammer 40K* brand. If you'd only made strategy games for over a decade, you'd be getting a bit bored of it, and you'd probably fancy trying your hand at something a little more visceral.

When we first heard that Relic was attempting a third-person shooter, we had flashbacks to the time

when we heard that The Creative Assembly was going to have a stab at hack-and-slash with *Spartan: Total Warrior*. That didn't turn out so well, and neither did The Creative Assembly's second attempt at an action title, *Viking: Battle For Asgard*. So yeah, we were a bit 'why not just stick with what you're good at?'

But now that we've seen *Space Marine* in action, we're feeling more optimistic. It's perhaps not the *Dawn Of War* of third-person shooters, but it certainly looks fun. Your first point of comparison is *Gears Of War*, mainly because the camera view is pretty much the same and because the playable character and accompanying squad of NPCs are very similar in appearance to COG troopers. Space Marines have been around since 1987, so these guys are actually the original interstellar ass-kickers, and any resemblance to COG troopers is down to imitation on *Gears Of War*'s part.

But anyway, beyond the first glance, *Space Marine* proves to be a quite different game to *Gears Of War* for two main reasons. First, there's

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Fountains of blood splattered all over the (Games Work) shop.
- Looks, sounds and feels very true to the *Warhammer 40,000* universe.

- Loads of weak enemies, which will make you feel super-tough by comparison.
- Relic Entertainment has never made a bad *Warhammer* game, so we're optimistic.



● Ultramarines are equipped with effective melee weapons, but sometimes a point-blank burst of Bolter fire will suffice.

no snap-to-cover system. Space Marines are essentially walking tanks and don't do wimpy things like taking cover. Relic wants you to feel like a fearless, death-wielding juggernaut, with the best form of defence always being relentless attack. This feeling of uber-power is further enhanced by the second major difference between *Space Marine* and *Gears Of War*: your enemies are numerous, and mostly very weak. Oh, and stupid.

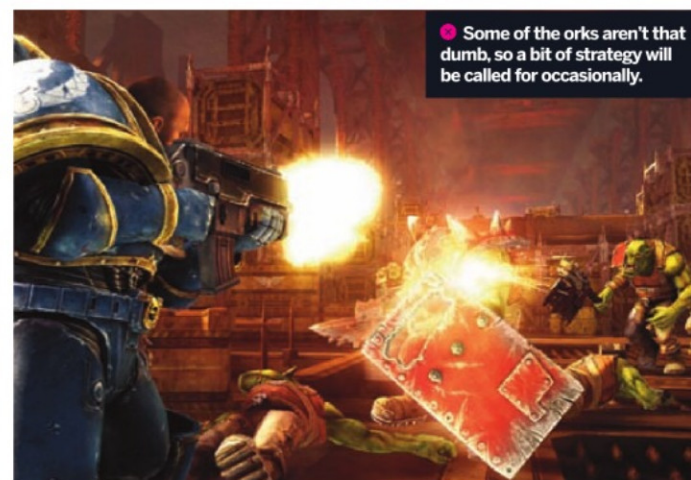
In all three of the levels we saw, the enemies all belonged to the ork faction, so they're stupid, aggressive and attack by trying to overwhelm you with sheer force of numbers. Fortunately, even your basic weapon, the Bolter, is capable of ripping foes apart with a single round, so you're well-equipped to prevent them from closing in. And even if they do, you have a variety of melee attacks at your disposal. The Marines' standard issue chainsword is a deadly weapon, but even their boots are capable of stamping an enemy clean in half.

So yes, our initial impression is that *Space Marine* is shaping up to be a very solid licensed third-person shooter, very much in the vein of *Transformers: War For Cybertron*. It's not original, but it's fun, it's faithful to its source material, and it knows how to keep the trigger-happy happy. It certainly looks to be the dawn of a new and exciting kind of war for Relic.

Space Marine is being developed by Relic Entertainment. Check the website for more details: www.relic.com.

READ ME

The first *Warhammer 40,000* action game since 2003's *Fire Warrior*, and the first non-RTS from *Dawn Of War* developer Relic Entertainment.



● Some of the orks aren't that dumb, so a bit of strategy will be called for occasionally.

THE BIGGER THEY COME...

...the more blood sprays everywhere when they fall

MOST ORKS DIE in battle before they're even fully grown, but a few survive battle after battle thanks to being just a little stronger and smarter than the rest, eventually rising to the rank of Warboss. You'll occasionally meet Warbosses and orks of other intermediate ranks and they won't go down as easily as their rookie brethren. You'll need to be wary of their powerful attacks and take care not to get surrounded while focusing your attention on them. You won't ever, ever hide from them, though. Not ever, no way.



PREVIEW



At the start of the game you must free fall from your prison high at the top of a tower.

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER



Boba has been available as DLC before but now he is part of the game proper.



The Force Unleashed II

A Force to be reckoned with?

PS3

Two words: Boba Fett. The famous Bounty Hunter will be playing an integral role in the sequel to the bestselling *Star Wars* game of all time. Normally that fact alone would be enough to get us that little bit more excited about returning to Starkiller's world; however, after a recent hands-on session with the latest build it's clear that *TFU II* has more to give, and this has the potential to deliver.

Many column inches have been dedicated to the faults of the first game: the targeting system was flawed, it was fairly repetitive and there was an annoying Star Destroyer level. But that's the past, and that's where we're willing to leave it. Despite a few niggles *TFU* was still the best *Star Wars* game to come out of LucasArts since the *Super Star Wars* series, and with a solid foundation on which to build, the team seems intent on writing the wrongs from the original.

The latest story details revealed refer to the protagonist's current predicament. Waking up in a holding cell on Kamino, Vader informs him that he's a clone of the slayed Starkiller; however, this 'clone' begins to experience flashbacks, in

particular the image of love interest Juno Eclipse. Vader dismisses these as faded memories of a dead man and devises a test of his loyalty: Starkiller must kill Proxy droids posing as his old friends – but ol' cloney can't bring himself to kill them. Vader, thinking he has a dud on his hands, orders the death of Starkiller 1.2, but the clone has other ideas – he uses his powers to escape, and triggers the first main set piece of the game: a free fall from the top of a tower, using his powers to destroy all in his path.

TIE Fighters are crushed, structures topple and glass shatters as Starkiller makes his descent down from his former prison. Whether the free fall will be a staple of the new game or just used here is unconfirmed, but it does add an element of variety that was previously missing. Once you make a dramatic entrance through the roof of a building below, it's time to test out those new (and old) abilities. Force Lightning, Push and Grip work in much the same way they did before – including the annoying camera angles when attempting Force Throws – however, the combat is improved thanks

to your dual Lightsabers, which cause a serious amount of damage. In fact, that was an element that really surprised us – unlike previous *Star Wars* iterations, the team has not shied away from violence. Stormtroopers' heads pop off like corks, the Saber throw helps to neutralise approaching enemies and new cinematic combat finishers have been included to help increase the sense of satisfaction at taking out a whole battalion of troopers.

You won't just be fighting stormtroopers this time around – a greater variety of enemy now exists in the world, and that includes the Carbonite droid that has the power to freeze you, just like a certain smooth-talking smuggler. Different enemies require different strategies, but most can be overcome with clever combinations of Force powers and Lightsaber skills.

Effective combinations of your abilities – such as the new mind control trick that forces enemies to turn on each other – and the destruction of your environment fills up your Force Fury meter that, when initiated, gives you a limited burst of power. Enough, as we found out to our satisfaction, to take down

three Scout Walkers and their crew who were blocking the route to our escape – Darth Vader's TIE Fighter.

Once you leave Kamino the dynamic changes – the original Starkiller was the hunter, and now he has become the hunted. You later meet up with former Mentor General Kota on an Imperial outpost known as Cato Neimoida, which plays host to activities such as gambling and gladiatorial combat. This is where we join Kota, who has been forced to fight for several days in a huge arena – lucky for him our young pup turns up to help before the gigantic Gorog is released, and the two team up to take the behemoth down. This was the first boss battle we witnessed, and it looked like a multi-tiered affair, with Starkiller inciting the beast to destroy the arena and itself.

With Starkiller causing all sorts of havoc in the galaxy, Vader decides he wants his boy back and hires Mr Fett to track him down. Pursued by Fett, Starkiller embarks on a journey that takes him to several planets, including the Dagobah system, where he meets a swamp dweller that fans will be very familiar with. It's unclear what part Yoda will play, but it's another element to add to the many we've mentioned, that's getting us extremely excited about playing more *Force Unleashed II*.

The core team from the first game return for the sequel and its progress can be tracked here: www.unleashed2010.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Classic characters will be playing a big part in the story.
- Much more violent than the first game and many more ways to dispatch enemies.
- Improvements to the controls should enhance the combat.
- There are (probably) no infuriating Star Destroyer sections.

READ ME

TFU II features time-trial mini-missions outside of the main game that help unlock additional content and Trophies.



PRODUCING THE GOODS

Brett Rector: Producer

Why do you hate stormtroopers so much? They always get such a hard time in *Force Unleashed* games and that looks to continue here...

No, you got it wrong. We love stormtroopers – for me as a kid of the Seventies I loved the stormtroopers. From the minute I saw them on screen I wanted my own armour. But you have to admit it's fun to torture them.



A criticism levelled at the first game is that the story was excellent but the gameplay didn't always match up – what have you done to address this?

We've really listened to feedback and addressed the problems such as the targeting system, but we've also layered on what we did well first time around. We listened to what people liked and have given them more of it this time. The Force Powers, for example. I think we did that very well so now they are amped up, so too with the melee combat. You also have the two Lightsabers now and that makes for more dynamic combat.

Why did you decide to go with two Lightsabers, and how are you balancing Starkiller's powers?

In the first game we thought about giving Starkiller a lot of different things, such as double Sabers or a staff, but in the end we opted for one. Given the more energised feel of this sequel, it felt right and opened up for more combat options.

Have you been tempted to add a multiplayer element to compete with other action adventures?

We were very conscious about making a strong single-player experience because this is a story-driven franchise, so we didn't want to just tack something on. That's not to say we wouldn't consider multiplayer in the future. We haven't decided what we're doing in the realms of DLC so it might be something we play with there.

You've had a lot more time to work with the Havok and Euphoria/DMM engines – what more have you managed to do with it?

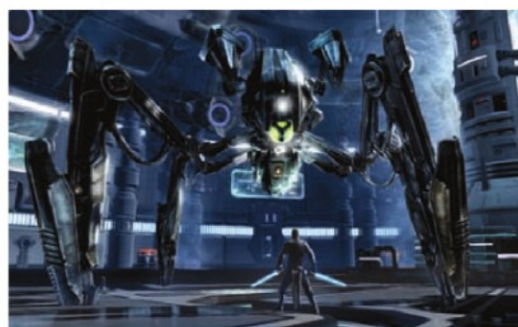
Well, there's a lot of muscle memory with the team and it's all about knowing the technology inside out. When we made the first game it was a brand-new engine and set of tools so we were developing from the ground up – we were trying to realise a vision as well as adapting to the new tools. Now we know a great deal more about how to achieve exactly what we want this time and push ourselves to achieve even more.

Any plans to incorporate Move features?

Again, it's something we might experiment with in the future but we have no plans to incorporate it into *The Force Unleashed II*.

What do you think about the emergence of 3D and how do you see it playing a part in gaming?

With something like 3D you want to do it right and not just shoehorn it in. If you're going to do it you have to make a statement. LucasFilm is a very progressive company and it wants to explore all avenues of new technology and use them to its advantage. So if we can find a good way to utilise this technology in the future then we certainly will.





● We only wish Tim Burton's Alice was half as interesting and weird as this will be.

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 2011

Alice: Madness Returns

Murder and insanity as Alice returns to Wonderland

PS3

American McGee's *Alice* was a cult classic from the PC that we've often wished we could have seen on a PlayStation platform. Now we're going to get a taste of a sequel as McGee's new studio Spicy Horse returns to Lewis Carroll's world and, much like the original, it's a darkly twisted version of the already fairly twisted tale we all know so well. It's been almost ten years since that first game and since then much has changed for American McGee, such as moving to Shanghai to set up Spicy Horse, but the core ideas that made *Alice* such a hit remain.

Alice took place some years after the events of the Lewis Carroll books, with Alice placed in a lunatic asylum after her family was killed in a house fire and she attempts to commit suicide. After ten years the White Rabbit arrives to bring Alice back to Wonderland where things have been falling apart. *Madness Returns* sees Alice go back to Wonderland once more with the possibility that her parents' deaths may not have been accidents. This time Spicy Horse is breaking free from the books, taking ownership of the world and making Alice far more powerful.

The key thing here is that Alice has come to realise that

Wonderland is really all a part of her own imagination. As such she has immense power and has been described by McGee as a kind of superhero in that world. Those powers include the ability to use her dress as a glider when jumping, attacking enemies with her vorpal sword (from the Carroll poem Jabberwocky), shooting enemies with a shotgun-like pepper grinder, changing her size and turning herself into a swarm of butterflies. Spicy Horse is also promising a bunch of new abilities that will be revealed further down the road.

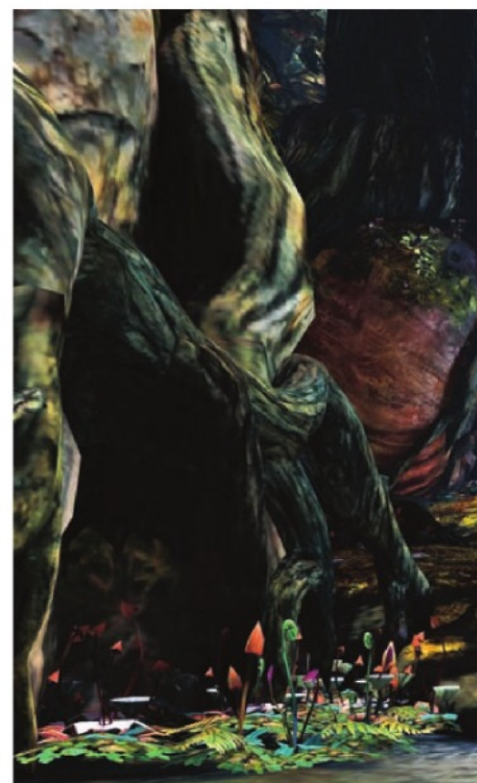
However, this version of Wonderland is one falling into decay and therefore one that no amount of power can necessarily control. As it is Wonderland is split into a number of different districts, some representing different parts of Alice's psyche and others controlled by various interests, such as Queensland, which is run by the last game's chief villain the Queen of Hearts. Hers was a world made of flesh and clawing tentacles, but now it is just a husk and her army of cards have become more like zombies than anything else. In this section Alice will almost be walking through a survival-horror game with a mixture of platforming, puzzles, exploration and plenty of story. It's

a rather complex mix of ideas and genres that mirrors Wonderland's own fractured nature. It's a combination of world and ideas that Spicy Horse believes will work really well together.

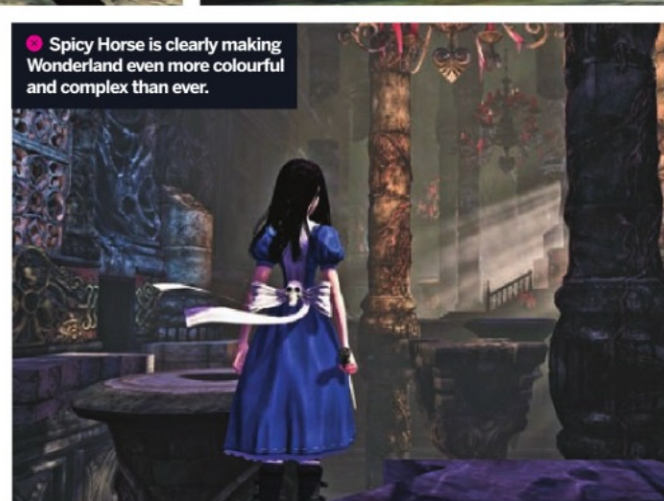
And it's not just Wonderland either. The hub world for *Madness Returns* is Victorian London where Alice will be looking for her parents' murderer, but obviously in contrast to Wonderland she has no power here. As a contrast to the wild imagination that informs Alice's world, London is being made as historically accurate as possible. In this world the game is a murder mystery as Alice attempts to piece together clues from her own mind and work out what really happened.

However, Spicy Horse is apparently already thinking beyond *Madness Returns* to possible sequels in the future, so you may as well set aside any concepts you have of what Wonderland is supposed to be like. American McGee's world is one that belongs totally to him and his team as it looks to open up this franchise for the future as well as give fans a completely new experience.

Alice: Madness Returns is being developed by American McGee's Spicy Horse. You can find out more about the developer at www.spicyhorse.com



● Spicy Horse is clearly making Wonderland even more colourful and complex than ever.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- An even more demented and twisted vision of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland.
- A mad mix of genres and homage to classic games wrapped up in a murder mystery.
- All the classic characters from the books will likely make an appearance.
- Features an accurate reproduction of Victorian London as its hub world.

READ ME

EA is hoping that the *Alice* brand post-movie will make this game much more of a success than the last *Alice*, which it also published.



● Alice is much older now, but is still haunted by the death of her parents.



● As Wonderland is an extension of Alice's own psyche she must seek clues she has lost.



● The domain of the Queen of Hearts is not what it once was.

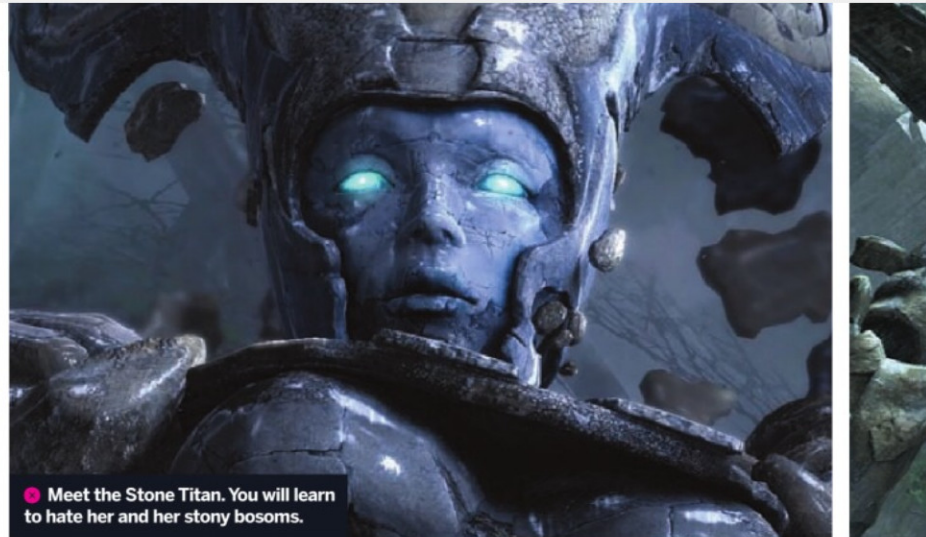


● Alice is much more powerful in this world than she used to be, but there are still dangers.

UNDERWATER LOVE

BioShock inspires Spicy Horse Alice revival

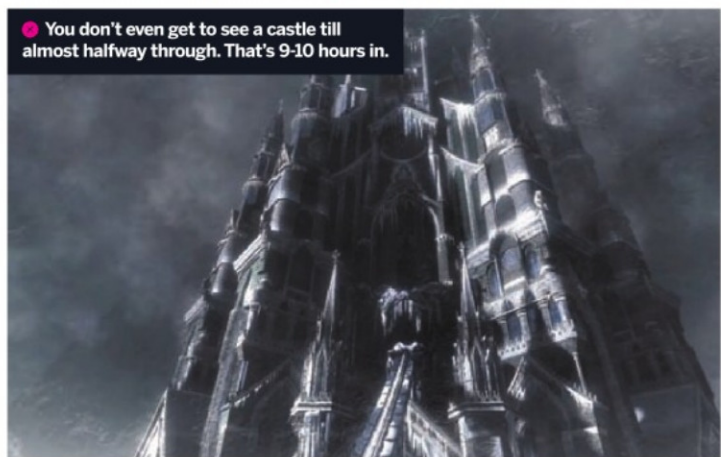
According to American McGee, the closest comparison to Lewis Carroll's Wonderland in terms of story progression is 2K's *BioShock*. In McGee's opinion Ken Levine has found the best way to tell a story in a videogame, using found objects and recordings scattered through the game world as well as voiceover communications. McGee actually spoke to Levine about how he came to these ideas for *BioShock* and has used what he's learnt to inform Alice's tale in this sequel. With Alice exploring Wonderland for clues about her parent's death we can see why *BioShock*'s structure would have appealed.



● Meet the Stone Titan. You will learn to hate her and her stony bosoms.



● You don't even get to see a castle till almost halfway through. That's 9-10 hours in.



● The Combat Cross is more like a long, retractable flail than a whip, but it still allows for some traditional *Castlevania* gameplay.

AAAAGH! WHASSAT!?

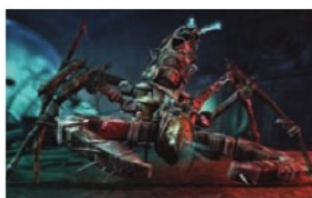
Top 5 scariest things we haven't met yet

THE FIRST FIVE hours of *Lords Of Shadow* is fairly wholesome. You meet lots of goblins and lycans (aka werewolves), plus a few trolls, golems, giant spiders and gremlins. It gets way nastier later, though. Look!



3 Scarecrow

It's the bit hanging down between the legs that bothers us most. It's not, y'know, a thingy, but there's still something intimidating about it.



5 Mechanical Monstrosity

A robotic scorpion? In 1047? Could it be that the same engineer that created Gabriel's Combat Cross, has got embroiled in the dark side?



4 Sword Master

It's like Orko from *He-Man* died and came back to life with a big sword and no eyes. It's amazing how much of a difference having no eyes makes.



2 Headless Burrower

There's something about another being ripping its own head off. "If this is what I do to myself, there's bugger all you can do to me."



1 Creeping Coffin

We've got to hand it to the design team, even without animation or sound this is one of the most horrific things we've ever seen in a game.





● The longer the game goes on, the darker and more macabre it gets.

HANDS-ON



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

Getting a little cross. Well, it's quite big actually

PS3

Five hours with *Lords Of Shadow* is a long time, but it's not enough to appreciate the full extent of its scale, its range of features or its epic narrative. *Lords Of Shadow* is epic in the fullest sense. It's not just that its set pieces are huge and grandiose in scale – it's long, full and rich in detail. Your character, Gabriel Belmont, is on an odyssey; his quest is to save the world from sinister dark forces in the name of The Brotherhood Of Light and, while he's at it, see if he can bring his wife back from the dead.

It's fairly traditional, mildly cheesy material, but it's handled with patience, subtlety and maturity

It's fairly traditional, mildly cheesy material, but it's handled with patience, subtlety and maturity. Rather than throwing you straight into a massive fight with a massive thing with a main character who's angry because everyone he likes has been killed, it introduces you to Gabriel through a moody, atmospheric cut-scene and a series of simple battles. It does this partly because it doesn't want to come off as desperate to grab your attention

and partly because, as we discovered, it's a surprisingly deep, complex game and takes the time to introduce ideas to you one at a time so you can appreciate the significance and purpose of each. MercurySteam has done a good job of not making it feel like one long tutorial, too.

Even after five hours, we were sure we hadn't learned everything, but we certainly didn't feel like we were only just beginning, still having our hand held and our game cut into bite-sized chunks for us. Not at all; our epic adventure felt well underway.

This careful pacing and the balanced way that new ideas are introduced while still driving the story and action forward are definitely *Lords Of Shadow's* strengths, although this smooth learning curve did hit a couple of nasty bumps later on in our hands-on session.

The first of these was a section where we had to find four shards in order to form a whole crystal. To find the first two we fought and solved our way through a variety of

battles and puzzles, and they were just there, pretty much in the open. Up to that point, it was a lot of fun – varied, satisfying and not too linear. But we ended up where we started with only two of the four shards. So we'd missed something and had to go back around again, fighting the same battles – some of which were very tough – again. This section unfolded in a logical way the first time around, but the second time it was disorientating and frustrating and we still couldn't find them. We ended up asking the journalist next to us, but even though he'd found them already, he got confused as to where they were. It turned out they were hidden on paths the ways into which weren't obvious, more because of misleading camera angle than anything else. It was annoying, not challenging.

The same could be said of the second Titan battle. Titans are bosses, but defeating them actually involves platforming gameplay more than anything resembling conventional combat, because you have to climb up their limbs to reach their weak spots. If you've played *Shadow Of The Colossus*, you'll recognise from where this has been borrowed. The first one, an Ice Titan, was an enjoyable and cinematic

experience. After a few hiccups, it became fairly clear what we needed to do and we didn't suffer too many setbacks, dying only the once. The second one, a Stone Titan, worked according to the same principles but was a little less forgiving and a bit more vague with its signposting and warnings of danger. These slight differences in difficulty parameters had a huge impact on how much fun it was compared to the Ice Titan. There's a very fine line between progressing through these battles and getting whacked back down to the ground again, and there's no grey area, no half-right and no real way to get *better* at it. This time the setbacks were numerous and harsh and, while it was all just as epic and spectacular as the first Titan battle, it produced far more anguish than excitement and ultimately took far, far too long.

It's a shame that the only two sections of *Lords Of Shadow* we didn't enjoy came at the end of our time with it, as it means our freshest memories of it are fairly sour ones. But there's no reason to suspect it had hit a downward turn from which it would never recover. Sure, we expect there are wee other annoying obstacles further on, but we're also pretty sure that many of its best bits were yet to come. We await a full playthrough with bated breath. Bated with garlic to ward off vampires, of course.

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow is being developed by MercurySteam Entertainment. Check the website for more details: www.mercurysteam.com.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Combat always has a semblance of purpose to it.
- Knows when to be loud and epic and when to be quiet and moody.
- Drip-feeds new features and ideas at a good, steady pace.
- There are beautifully rendered, deeply atmospheric environments.

READ ME

Another new direction for the long-running gothic action-adventure series. This time, Gabriel Belmont takes on the Lords Of Shadow.

PREVIEW



Kazuya's moves remain as explosive as ever in *Street Fighter X Tekken*.

This is officially what we like to call a 'BOOM' moment.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Street Fighter X Tekken

A clash of fighting titans we never thought we would see

NAMCO VS CAPCOM

Team Tekken will have its say too

AS WELL AS *Street Fighter X Tekken*, Yoshinori Ono and Katsuhiro Harada revealed that Harada would be leading his *Tekken* team at Namco Bandai in the development of *Tekken X Street Fighter*. This game will be the reverse of Ono's most likely using some form of the *Tekken* engine and in 3D. Namco is keeping tight lipped on this project, but there's every chance it will launch close to if not simultaneously with the Capcom game.



What the hell?

Yes, exactly. This was not something we thought we would ever see either. So much so that last issue we listed it as one of the craziest rumours of E3 that *SF* and *Tekken* would meet each other.

No, I mean how is Nina Williams managing to keep that outfit on?

Oh, well that's a fair question too. We're not exactly sure, but we would guess some kind of tape or adhesive. Kudos to her for attempting it. She'll give Cammy a run for her money dressed like that.

Anyway, *Tekken* and *Street Fighter*. Shouldn't they be mortal enemies?

You may think so and some fans of each series would agree, but behind the scenes Yoshinori Ono (producer of *Street Fighter*) and Katsuhiro Harada (producer of *Tekken*) are good friends. Having worked on rival titles for many years the two of them have had the opportunity many times, so really the idea for this meet up between the two games has been simmering for a while.

When did it all come together then?

According to Ono and Harada things started to get serious last year as *Street Fighter IV* and *Tekken 6* were releasing on consoles in the same year and this meant they were both at events promoting their games. With *Street Fighter IV* helping to boost the profile of beat-'em-ups again we're sure Namco Bandai's *Tekken* team were pleased to see Capcom re-enter the ring.

Even so, these games are surely far too different to work together?

We originally thought so too, but actually we were wrong. While projectiles make up a good portion of *Street Fighter*'s style there are still plenty of hand-to-hand fighters on the roster (Zangief and Abel for instance) who manage just fine. Plus *Tekken* fighters cause little

explosions every time they hit someone. That sounds like a good fit to us.

But what about *Street Fighter* being 2D and *Tekken* being 3D?

Traditionally that's been how these games operate, but really the 3D world of *Tekken* is only one tool in its bag. More often than not it's really a 2D, side-on fighter. Sidestepping is something that hardcore *Tekken* fans may miss, but it's not essential. *Street Fighter IV* also moved its characters into 3D models this time around, so that's got 3D covered too. Put those two together now and we think the balance is pretty good.

So, it's like another version of *Street Fighter IV*?

We wouldn't say so, but it certainly looks like it's being built using the *SFIV* engine.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

The two best fighting games in the world finally joining forces in one game.

Built using the excellent *Street Fighter IV* engine that we love so much.

Tag team play that combines the special attacks of your characters.

Being made by *Street Fighter IV*'s development team at Capcom.



● *Street Fighter X Tekken* looks to be using *SF IV* character models.



FAQ



● If anything we think *Street Fighter X Tekken* looks better than *SSFIV*.



● Nina Williams' outfits remain as impossible looking as ever.

The *Street Fighter* cast will likely be very similar in terms of moves, specials and ultras as we've seen in those games so far, but there two major changes. The first is obviously the addition of the *Tekken* team, which means a whole bunch of new characters with entirely unique move sets that will all need specials and ultras designed for them. The second is team play, a staple of Capcom's other franchise-clashing fighters.

So you'll be tagging people in and all that stuff?

Yes, but much more than that. As we saw from the live gameplay at Comic-Con you'll be able to combine ultra attacks with your team-mates. In the case of Kazuya Mishima and Nina Williams, which we saw at the event, this involved Nina attacking and then holding Ryu as Kazuya went in for the kill. That would suggest that combined Ultra would be unblockable and inescapable in some instances.

Capcom's *Street Fighter* team lead by Yoshinori Ono will be handling this game. You can keep up to date on it at www.streetfighter.com/sfxtk

READ ME

Series producer Yoshinori Ono claimed at this year's Comic-Con that *Street Fighter* fans saved his job by heavily supporting *Street Fighter IV* last year.



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Fallout: New Vegas

One hour photon

PS3 You can't really get a sense of what a *Fallout* game is like until you've been afforded a little freedom with it. Watching a developer play through a demo certainly doesn't give you a sense of it. And even getting a hands-on with a couple of isolated missions from the middle of the game isn't much better. But one hour to do whatever you want starting at the beginning does give you a true feel for the game, albeit a brief one, and that's what we got.

Fortunately, the opening section of *Fallout: New Vegas* plays out quicker than that of *Fallout 3*, otherwise that'd take up our whole hour. You don't have to play through a long, linear childhood section to create your character. Instead you

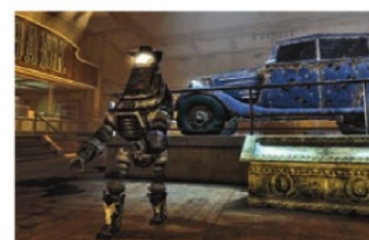
do this in Doc Mitchell's office via a process that can be completed in five minutes. In addition to all the Stats and Perks from *Fallout 3* there's a new Skill, Survival, which is used to create consumables and enhances the stat boosts from using them. Plus Traits have been reintroduced. Traits, as featured in *Fallout 1, 2* and *Tactics*, are like Perks but are optional and have positive and negative results. You can choose up to two at the start.

Once you leave the Doc's office, you can go where you want, although you're encouraged to stay in the town of Goodsprings and do some simple missions that act as tutorials. We did a few of these then ventured out into the wilderness where we were ambushed

by Powder Gangers who are essentially Raiders that specialise in using explosives. They're still dumb enough to step on their own mines, though.

We looted their bodies and headed for the town of Primm, which we discovered had been taken over by escaped convicts. The NCR (New Californian Republic) troops camped outside the town gates wanted our help recapturing Primm, but we needed to meet a contact with a mission for us inside. But almost as soon as we headed into the town, our hour was up.

Fallout: New Vegas is being developed by Obsidian Entertainment. Check the website for more details: www.obsidianent.com.



MAKE AND DO[OM]

Sticky back plastic not required

NEW VEGAS WILL expand upon the item creation system in *Fallout 3*. Instead of just using workbenches to assemble weapons using your Repair skill, you'll be using a variety of special locations to create a range of items using different skills depending on the location type. For example, a campfire works much the same way as a workbench only it uses your Survival skill and is geared towards creating consumable items like poisons.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- New Vegas definitely has that trademark *Fallout* feel to it. So fans will be in familiar territory.
- Its twisted sense of humour made us laugh out loud on several occasions.
- Just one hour with this left us desperate for more.
- There are tons of different items for you to create.

READ ME

There's a new Perk in *New Vegas* called **Confirmed Bachelor**, which is exactly the same as **Black Widow**, only can be chosen by a male character.



Using her dragonfly, Trip can update your HUD with info, like the locations of mines.



IN-DEPTH

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Enslaved: Odyssey To The West

New York as an urban playground

PS3

We're seven chapter into *Enslaved* and things have taken a turn for the worse. Thankfully we don't mean in terms of gameplay, as that has continued to excite and surprise us throughout. No, the tale of Monkey and Trip and their odyssey has taken a turn for the dark, and what was once a rollicking adventure of suspense is turning into something far darker and more intimidating.

But you'll find no spoilers here. From this opening segment of Ninja Theory's latest opus, it's clear that the story that it's attempting to tell should be experienced rather than read, and we'd much rather be dipping back into that world and finding out how things work out than spoil it for you.

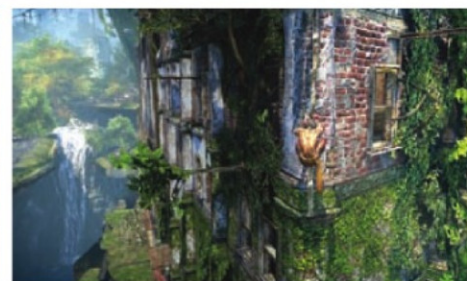
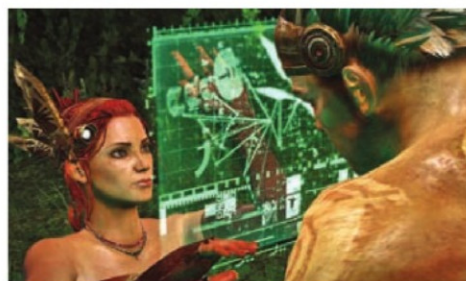
Of course, that is largely thanks to the fine balance between story and gameplay that has been achieved with *Enslaved*, and it's clear that lessons have been learnt since *Heavenly Sword*. The balance of fighting, puzzle solving, stealth and platforming with narrative is much smoother and more satisfying here

than it was in Ninja Theory's last game. No one task or challenge seemed to outstay its welcome, and there was always something fresh around the corner.

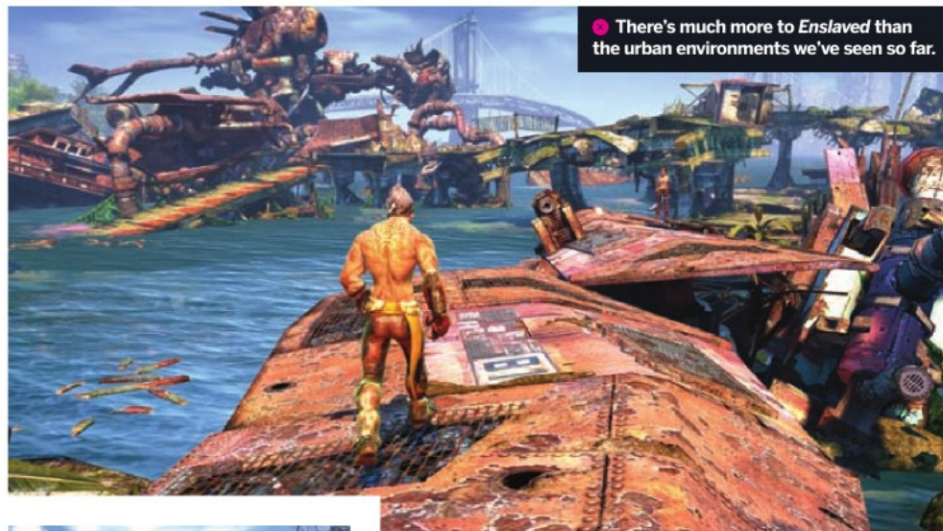
This is helped by the structure of the early part of the game, which is broken up into chapters and a series of areas as Monkey attempts to escape New York and get Trip home. It's rare for two areas in a row to repeat the same mechanics, so you should be kept on your toes. You might have an open area with some mechs to fight in one area, followed by a stealthier section next and then maybe some platforming and puzzles to follow. In between all this, Trip and Monkey talk as you move around, keeping cut-scenes to a minimum without skimping on the story. It's another fine balance.

Overall, *Enslaved* is looking very good, with only some slightly loose controls holding it back from real greatness. With plenty of time until release, that could yet be remedied.

Enslaved is being developed by Ninja Theory. You can find videos and screens at enslaved.namco.com



There's much more to *Enslaved* than the urban environments we've seen so far.



ON CLOUD ONE

Monkey has tricks of his own **TRIP IS REALLY** the tech expert of *Enslaved* with her scanning dragonfly and holographic computer, but Monkey has a toy or two as well. One that we enjoyed was his 'Cloud', which looked like a holographic disc that he uses as a hoverboard. You're first introduced to it in an open water area, but later you'll need to use it to take on a pretty scary boss fight. It certainly adds a little extra adrenaline to proceedings.



Wide attacks help to push enemies back so you can take them on one at a time.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A wonderfully designed and realised game world to explore and climb.
- The relationship between Monkey and Trip is well worth exploring.
- A good mixture of gameplay that should help keep things interesting.
- This feels like a game that could really surprise us. We can't wait to find out.

READ ME

Ninja Theory is apparently already working on its next 'story-driven' project. Rumours suggest a *Devil May Cry* game, but we're not sure.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Fight Night Champion

Float like a floatbot, sting like an automated stinging machine

PS3

It looks like *Fight Night* will never get to round five, as it seems that the fight was stopped and a champion has been crowned. Either that or this is just the next game in the *Fight Night* series and it has adopted the word 'Champion' as part of its title. Who knows?

But this isn't just a simple name change – no, *Champion* will see the series offer experiences unlike anything we've seen before. This must be true – the press release told us so. Publisher promises aside, the new box-'em-up will come with an improved physics engine – we hope this means there will be less of a floaty feel and more weight put behind the punches.

There will also be an improvement in the looks of *Champion* – though this is a given – leading to more exclamations from us and those around us that, 'It really does look quite nice.' This has never actually been a lie, we should point out – the

Fight Night series has been a looker for quite a while, even if we do now look back at previous iterations and snort derisively.

One of the main elements that EA is sure to be pushing in the coming months, though, is the introduction of Full Spectrum Punch Control, which is set to incorporate the previously mentioned physics engine as well as make *Champion* appeal to a wider market than *Fight Night* ever has before. This most likely means that players won't be forced to use the right analogue stick to control punching if they don't want to – something that had to be remedied via a patch in *Fight Night Round 4*.

We'll be keeping a close eye on *Champion* to see how EA can keep boxing relevant in a world increasingly interested in alternative combat sports like MMA.

Fight Night Champion is being developed by EA Canada. Check out www.easports.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- We're likely to see the return of the legends.
- A refined and reworked control scheme could bring new life.
- It's going to take us aback with how nice it looks.
- PJ & Duncan's *Let's Get Ready To Rhumble* could be the theme track.

READ ME

Fight Night – formerly *Knockout Kings* – has been going since 1998. The earlier titles don't stand up to modern scrutiny, it's safe to say.

WHO'S WHO

Manny and many other men

THE ONLY BOXER revealed to be in *Fight Night Champion* so far is Manny 'Pacman' Pacquiao, but we're sure he will be accompanied by the established faces of the past and present. A return by Mike Tyson would be something we'd want to see, along with the inclusion of Prince Naseem Hamed. Ah, classic boxing.



And yes, there's even football in it too!



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

PES 2011

Also known as Winning Eleven 11

PS3 Every year at this time we're filled with an odd sense of both dread and hope in anticipation of the arrival of the latest PES in the office. The hope is that the trademark 'PES Magic' will make a return. And the dread comes from knowing it's unlikely to do so, simply because it didn't last year, or the year before, or the year before that...

PES Magic is important because, for all the polish and sophistication it's managed to evolve, FIFA still doesn't have it. And if only PES restored it, it wouldn't matter that FIFA had all the technology, the big budget and the official licences – PES could be the better game again.

So, we've got PES 2011 preview code now – does it have it? Well, it certainly hints at it. You see, PES Magic isn't a feature; it's more of a feel. A football game has PES Magic when it's possible to attain a kind of Zen with it, when it becomes almost totally intuitive and when your emotions become totally

attuned to the ebb and flow of each match. PES 2011 in its current form is too flawed to have it, but it does have a very natural, intuitive, lively feel to it and there is a spark there – the sort of spark that FIFA has always been too dry to generate. But if its problems aren't fixed before its release, we expect it will once again be the second best football game of the year by a clear margin.

The biggest problem is the AI. Defenders, whose marking is very suspect, have a weird habit of standing on the goal line, even when the ball is halfway up the pitch, and attackers will start making runs then stop before they pass any defenders. Players sometimes just lose interest in the ball altogether, occasionally even when dribbling. These issues *must* get fixed, otherwise whatever magic might be generated elsewhere in the game will never get the chance to shine.

PES 2011 is being developed by KCE Tokyo. Check out the website for more details: www.konami-europe.com



HANDS-ON



Will this version have that unmistakable 'PES magic'?

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Visuals, audio and presentation continue to improve.
- More ways to tactically tinker with your team's setup than ever before.
- There are definitely hints of the old Pro Evolution Soccer magic in there.
- Finally! You can create your own stadium. At last! We've been waiting for so long!

READ ME

Game simulating a sport in which two teams of eleven men compete to place a leather ball into a netted, wooden frame known as a 'goal' without using their hands. You might have heard of it.



Here it is – the hotly anticipated Stadium Edit mode in full effect. Wow!

FIDDLING WITH YOUR TACTICALS

Sliders, stats, charts... phwoar!



IF YOU'RE THE sort of person who salivates at the prospect of tinkering with every aspect of your team playing style, you're no doubt dribbling all down your chin just from looking at these screens. Look at those different sliders with things written on them, and imagine all the ways your team will play depending on what positions you decide to put those sliders in. Blimey!

PREVIEW



● Ladder interactivity has also been improved, meaning yoCODEBREAKER!



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

SmackDown Vs Raw 2011

AWEEEEEEEEESOOOOOOOOOME!

PS3 Playing the latest update of the yearly *SmackDown Vs Raw* series, it soon dawned on us that there really wasn't much new here beyond an improved physics engine and some better-looking muscles to get excited about.

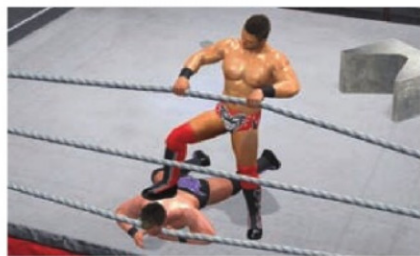
Obviously we, being **Play**, devastated all-comers with a fine repertoire of Tombstones, Codebreakers and RKOs (and a Skull-Crushing Finale, just for good measure), and it was simple

enough to do so as *SmackDown Vs Raw 2011*'s control scheme remains unchanged from last year. As such veterans will be able to jump straight back in and beat anyone who stands before them. Well, this is only true if you write for **Play**, but you get the point.

The new feature of this year's game is the improved physics engine, applying to tables, chairs and whatever other foreign objects litter ringside. Tables can be stacked on top of each other for opponents to be slammed through, and ladders are able to be rested on the ropes to create some fun obstacles to run around/up/through. Slamming your foe onto a downed ladder still brings forth a satisfying reaction, of that we cannot deny. But really, that's it.

We've been told there's more to come, and hopefully announcements will reveal elements to get more excited about in future, but for now we're remaining cautious about *SmackDown Vs Raw 2011*. It looks like *WWE All Stars* may well be the game to watch this year.

SmackDown Vs Raw 2011 is being developed by Yuke's. Check out www.smackdownvsraw.com for more details.



● Table physics have been improved to make tables more like tables.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Not much new here but the muscular flexing technology is rather spiffy.
- Even more create-a-story options than ever before. Probably.
- We will never tire of be-panted men pretending to fight.
- There's little chance the GM computer will be in the game.



● Over the top/downright stupid, yet it all suits.

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

WWE All Stars

Do you smell what we're cooking?

PS3 Following our brief look at *WWE All Stars* last month we were able to have an equally brief play of the game. Getting to grips with this fast-paced, arcadey version of your more standard wrestling game didn't take too long, and before much time had passed we were Rock Bottoming and Attitude Adjusting to our heart's content.

The combat in *WWE All Stars* is simple, mixing strikes with grapples and allowing players to pull off some frankly ridiculous combinations. Slam an opponent into the mat and watch as



● We once did a 34-point big boot. In your FACE, Cena.

All Stars doesn't take itself too seriously and acts as a pleasant cure to the po-faced sim that is *SmackDown Vs Raw*. It's not as out-and-out arcadey as the classic *WrestleMania: The Arcade Game* was, instead striking a balance more towards technique and grapples than firing ghosts out of tombstones or using baseball bats as heavy punch attacks.

What we played showed us there is a fair amount of potential for *All Stars* to grind out its own sub-genre – sillier than standard 'rasslin titles but deep enough to entertain hardened brawler fans.

WWE All Stars is being developed by THQ San Diego. Check out www.wweallstars.com for more details.

Slam an opponent into the mat and watch as he bounces five metres in the air

he bounces five metres in the air, juggle him with a couple of quick punches then grapple again – still in the air – and round off your combo. It's little bits of play like that that get the blood pumping and the crowd (in the game and in real life) cheering along.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Silly and over the top = fun. Everything you could want from a wrestling game.
- John Cena looks more realistic in this game than ever before.
- Seeing wrestling legends in gaming form is always great.
- We've been reminded of our long-standing love for The Rock.



● The Rock is great. We love The Rock. We miss The Rock.



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MEDAL OF HONOR

THE LATEST ON... Or: the Konami and Tecmo Koei show



ATELIER RORONA: THE ALCHEMIST OF ARLAND

Publisher NIS Europe Developer Gust
ETA TBC 2010 Format PS3

THE TRADITIONAL TAKE on a turn-based RPG is mixed up a bit with this latest of the *Atelier* games. Players take on the role of an alchemist and must complete enough activities – mixing potions and the like – in a set amount of time to avoid foreclosure.



LUCHA LIBRE AAA: HÉROES DEL RING

Publisher Slang/Konami Developer Immersion Games
ETA October Format PS3

AN ALTERNATIVE TO the yearly WWE titles is always something that piques our interest. This title in particular follows the *lucha libre* style of wrestling so popular around Mexico way. As such, expect high-flying moves and funny-looking masks throughout. We do so hope it actually plays a good match, too.



NEVERDEAD

Publisher Konami Developer Rebellion
ETA TBC Format PS3

A THIRD-PERSON action shooter set in a world of the near-future. The main character, a lone hero, can happily have his limbs cut down to zero. But he carries on, because he's not dead; he just picks up and reattaches his own head. Tongue in cheek it may be, but is it good? We shall see.



SAW II: FLESH & BLOOD

Publisher Konami Developer Zombie Studios
ETA Autumn 2010 Format PS3

EVEN THOUGH WE didn't like the first one (52%, *Play* 186), we're still racked with morbid curiosity as to what the second game will bring. It doesn't sound like the entire thing has been ripped up and started again from scratch, so we're not *that* hopeful, but it could provide some entertainment.



FIST OF THE NORTH STAR: KEN'S RAGE

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Omega Force
ETA 30 September Format PS3

THE JAPANESE VERSION of this has already been reviewed in our sister publication *games™*, where they awarded it a rather good 7/10. But you can't trust them to provide you with your opinions, so you should probably wait until our thoughts on this *Dynasty Warriors*-alike make themselves known. It makes sense.



TONY HAWK: SHRED

Publisher Activision Developer Robomodo
ETA Winter 2010 Format PS3

WE WEREN'T FANS of the last *Tony Hawk* title, *Ride*, so we're approaching *Shred* with a great deal of caution. The addition of snowboarding could make things a bit more interesting and fill the *SSX*-shaped hole in our hearts, mind. But we're still reserving all judgement for now.



TRINITY: SOULS OF ZILLO'LL

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Omega Force
ETA Winter 2010 Format PS3

THIS ACTION-RPG – another offering from Omega Force – brings both a fun little name and screens that fill us with a great deal of not much. How are we meant to look forward to something that looks so utterly banal? Hopefully the game will be some cop, though, so it might not all be bad.



WARRIORS: LEGENDS OF TROY

Publisher Tecmo Koei Developer Koei Canada
ETA November 2010 Format PS3

ANOTHER GAME IN the *Dynasty Warriors* series, though this time bridging the gap between 'killing thousands of people' and 'killing thousands of people in glorious, bloody violence'. Yes, *Legends Of Troy* will offer claret by the gallon and will be the first *Dynasty Warriors* title to be rated 'M' in the States.



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 3

Publisher Codemasters Developer In-house
ETA TBC 2011 Format PS3

A TRAILER FOR *Dirt 3* finally surfaced, giving us our first look at this hotly anticipated dirt-based drive-'em-up. The Codies have claimed that the game will be the "biggest, [most] content-rich racer" the studio has ever made. It will feature around 50 rally cars and, frankly, has us quite excited. *Dirt 2* was great.

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PLAY MAG Reviews 点検

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Including: Mafia II, the original gangster /// Kane & Lynch, the Cannon & Ball of mature gaming /// Don't get even, get Madden 11



84 Mafia II

A nice bit of 'family' entertainment

on review

- 84 Mafia II PS3
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- 89 H.A.W.X. 2 PS3
- 90 Valkyria Chronicles II PSP
- 91 Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep PSP
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- 93 Start The Party! PS3
- 93 Kung Fu Rider PS3



86 Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days PS3

Woof woof!



88 Madden NFL 11 PS3

Hut hut!



89 Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 PS3

Mayday mayday!

review panel



Ben Biggs

Reviewed:
Valkyria Chronicles II

Ben's most recent boxing match was against a huge Russian heavyweight named Vadim Drygin. At first, Ben was booed by the Russian crowd and took a pounding from 'The Juggernautski' in the first round. But round after round he fought back, clawing (in one instance literally) his way back into contention, slowly winning the crowd over and winning by a knockout in the final round. He then delivered an impassioned speech about how he and the crowd had learned to respect each other and about how people really *can* change.

currently playing:

UFC Undisputed 2010



Ian

Reviewed:
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2, Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep, Sports Champions, Kung Fu Rider, Start The Party!

Ian and his two friends, Campo and Figgy, tried to help another friend, Howell, deliver a bath tub as a gift to Howell's extra-marital mistress Miranda this month, but it all went wrong and all three of them ended up in the tub, rolling down a steep hill, completely out of control. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but Howell's wife went mental at him. Then Campo tried to chat up a woman in wrinkly tights and she chased him with a broom.

currently playing:

Red Dead Redemption



Jonathan Gordon

Reviewed:
Mafia II

In preparation for his trip to Germany to cover Gamescom Jon decided to meet up with a group of British prisoners and plan a series of daring escapes. His early efforts were of course thwarted, largely due to his inability to speak a word of German (although he can sing a little in it). Eventually a tunnel system was devised that could get his comrades well beyond the perimeter fence where he found a motorcycle and drove towards the Swiss border. Rumours he is now a watch repairer in Basel have yet to be confirmed.

currently playing:

Scott Pilgrim Vs The World



Gavin Mackenzie

Reviewed:
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

Gav went to LA this month where he rescued a beautiful young woman who'd been pushed in the sea by her gangster ex-boyfriend.

He gave her mouth-to-mouth and thinks it was the sensual touch of his lips, and not his breath, that revived her. Later that day he found out that one of his lifeguard trainees had been using steroids to improve his performance in rookie school, so he fired the coach. Finally in the evening, he went home to see his teenage son, Bobie, who had not got himself into life-threatening trouble just this once.

currently playing:

Peggle

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Mafia II



DETAILS

Publisher
2K Games
Developer
2K Czech
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network,
Downloadable
content, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
mafia2game.com

Is it the Don or does it sleep with the fishes?

PS3 We appear to have reached an interesting point in the growth of the sandbox genre in which two completely different approaches have emerged. One has been best expressed by *Just Cause 2* and its playground of toys and physics. The other, which *Mafia II* is as good an example of as any, uses an open world as a backdrop to the story it's trying to tell. Because of this we imagine that *Mafia II* will split opinion heavily. This is no playground.

If you were to try and judge *Mafia II* as an open-world game it would be a relative failure. It's map is minuscule when compared to other games in this field (even *Saints Row 2*, which wasn't exactly gigantic), there's very little interactivity with the game world, side missions are non-existent and the incentives to explore or experiment are minimal. At this stage you may be thinking that *Mafia II* isn't going to be a game for you and you could be right, but that isn't the end of this tale.

It would be fairer to judge it against other story-driven action games like *Arkham Asylum*, because in this company *Mafia II* excels. Gameplay-wise 2K Czech has hit the nail on the head with the most important elements (driving and shooting) as good as you'll find around. The cover system is simple, but effective and importantly not 100 per cent foolproof. Getting caught at the edge of cover or behind destructible scenery is a threat and the enemy AI is smart enough not to just stand still and wait for you to cap them. A

2K Czech is ruthless in how it deals with its characters. No one appears to be safe from its wrath

mixed system of regenerating and replenishing health (health will only regenerate so much before you eat, drink or sleep again) can also be ruthless. Watch out for that shotgun fire.

Much like the first game the driving can also be ruthless, although the car handling is excellent and varied between vehicles. There aren't a huge number of cars, but the sportier ones don't take long to become available and any you grab and get back to your garage will

remain available. Speeding, jumping lights and getting into accidents – if spotted by the police – will get you into bother, but using the speed limiter (a quick press of **X**) eliminates one of those problems for you. If you do happen to get into a car chase with the cops it's all about line of sight and how open to view you are when you're spotted committing a crime.

We largely remained out of police clutches as we played through thanks to a liberal use of clothing stores and chop shops. Just get out of sight and if the police have your registration, change the number plate and if they have a physical description, change your clothes. It couldn't be simpler really and it works very well. Besides which, much like all the goons you'll be facing, the police pull no punches in a pursuit and will happily blow your head off if you show the least bit of resistance.

However, where *Mafia II* is strongest is in its story. The tale of Vito Scalleta's introduction and rise through the Cosa Nostra ranks is what keeps *Mafia II* so gripping. There can be no denying that it draws many parallels with the great mafia films of the last 50 years such as *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather*, but it still manages to surprise on a number of occasions. Uniquely, the moral of *Mafia II*'s story is not that organised crime in America is a whole lot of fun. Every sin that Vito commits comes back to haunt him in some fashion and unlike *Red Dead Redemption*'s John Marston, Vito is not a man denouncing his violent past at the same time he revels in it. He is openly ruthless and calculating, yet remains largely sympathetic. He is fortune's fool at worst.

The narrative is what makes up for a lack of side distractions. It drags you from pillar to post in quite a linear fashion, but it never lets up. Some dark surprise seems to lurk around every corner and ultimately, much like before, 2K Czech is ruthless in how it deals with its characters. No one appears to be safe from its wrath. It only really falters in small areas, such as the juvenile search for *Playboy* centrefolds and lingering shots of half-naked hookers that degrades the genuine maturity of the rest of



It's not all fun and games for Vito as his crimes catch up with him again and again.



Pool tables, but alas no pool. For an open-world game there isn't much to do.





• The opening part of the game is actually set in 1943 Sicily as Vito goes to war.



PAST CRIMES

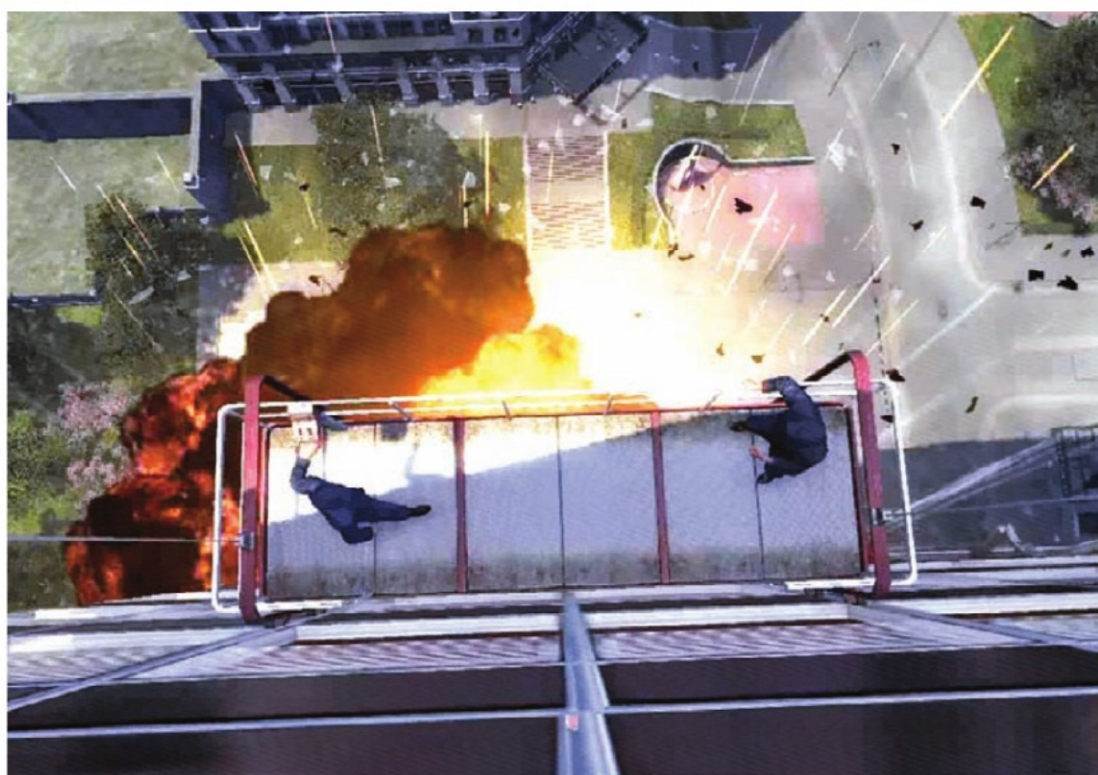
Mafia II finishes some old business



WHEN PLAYING THROUGH

Mafia II keep an eye out for one mission a little after halfway through in which you'll be asked by Vito's best friend Joe to join a hit on an unnamed target. Joe whispers something for Vito to say to the man when he's killed, as they drive to the

location for the hit where they find a man watering his garden. If you've completed *Mafia* you'll know who this gentleman is and what will come next. If not then the importance of this act and the drama that the music is suggesting will be somewhat lost on you.



the game. And in all honesty the characters' animations and some of the supporting character models look a little dated next to the motion-captured marvels we're seeing more and more these days.

At around 11-12 hours from beginning to end it isn't the longest game ever unless you want to go searching for those *Playboys*, but you can go back and replay specific chapters or just drive around the world as you please. The ending is the ending, though, with no free-roaming opportunities offered after the credits. That limits this game's replay value, but for our money *Mafia II* is as good an action game as we've seen all year.

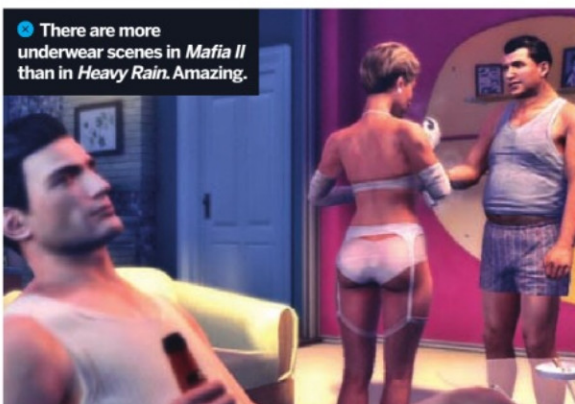
Jon Gordon

VERDICT

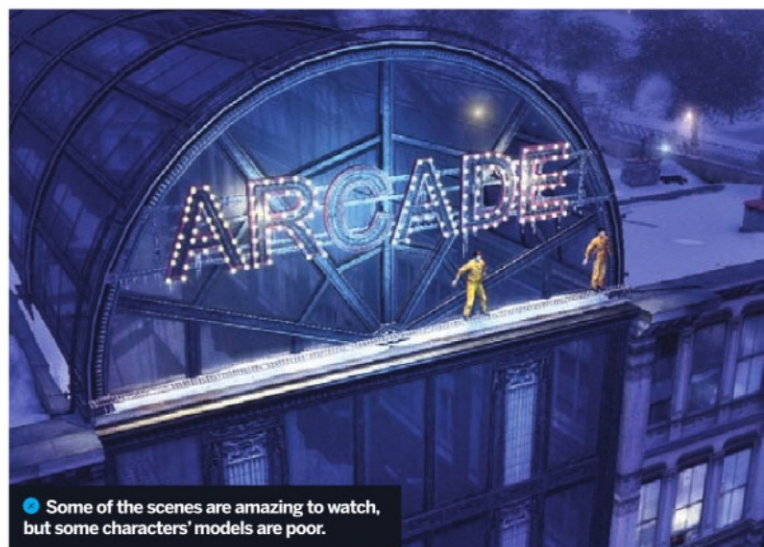
Some fantastic visuals, superb soundtrack, excellent characters and solid gameplay go a long way towards making up for the lack of distractions and amusements in *Mafia II*'s Empire Bay. Don't expect a *Fifties GTA* and you'll come out much happier.

81%

• There are more underwear scenes in *Mafia II* than in *Heavy Rain*. Amazing.



• The shooting mechanics have 'snap to' aiming much like *Call Of Duty*.



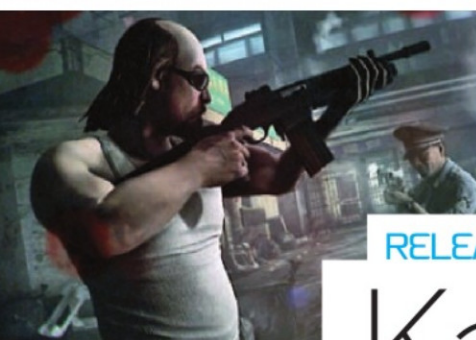
• Some of the scenes are amazing to watch, but some characters' models are poor.



In this series



Mafia Issue 113
Thematically superb, but in all other areas its just too flat. 65%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

Bringing back the Kane... and the Lynch



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
IO Interactive
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Third-person
shooter
Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network,
Downloadable
content, DualShock
3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.kaneandlynch.
com



It's depressing when reviewing a sequel to re-read the review of its predecessor and discover that almost the whole thing could be cut and pasted into your own review and still apply. And it's especially disheartening when that archive review concludes with the hope that IO Interactive will "go fix what's broken and make a truly stunning sequel." This is where we pause to let out a long, heavy sigh.

Looking back through the complaints listed in **Play #160's** review of *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*, we can only find one problem that's



been fixed, and even that has only really been half fixed. Where using the snap-to cover system previously involved haphazardly pushing yourself against cover, hoping to stick, it now has its very own button. You press **(X)** to take cover, you press **(X)** to leave cover. Unfortunately, all the other issues with the cover system are still present and incorrect. Specifically, the level designers still seem to have taken an inexplicably hit-and-miss, or perhaps careless, approach to determining what you can and can't take cover behind.

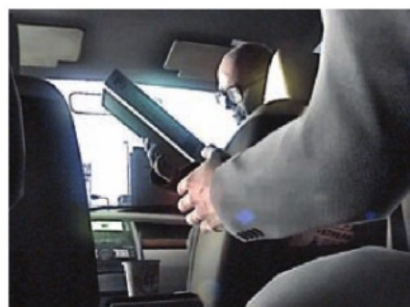
One shoot-out takes place on a highway slip road with abandoned cars strewn about it and, for no apparent reason, some of the cars cannot be used for cover. So you're in cover behind a car, you decide the car in front would give you a better position so you make a dash for it, press **(X)**... nothing happens... press it again... nothing... move to the other end of the car... press it... nothing... by now you've been standing there without cover for a while and

you get knocked to the ground. Ironically, this is something of a relief as, lying on the ground, you are actually covered by the car now. Still, it's frustrating and just plain rubbish that there are these 'no cover for no reason' spots littered about the game.

But even when you do take cover, it just doesn't work very well. We often found we couldn't move or aim as freely as we would

It does produce a truly unique and sometimes very strong atmosphere

like when in cover and that it tended not to provide much protection anyway. In many situations we just ignored the snap-to option and simply moved in and out of cover by walking back and forth. That way we were less disorientated and much more in control. Generally, moving proved a much better means of defence than staying put in cover because, as in *Dead Men*, the enemy AI is hopeless at tracking your position and



GLAZER'S DOUBLE

Caine & Lynch?

GLAZER, A BRITISH gang boss living in Shanghai, is one of the main supporting characters in *Dog Days* and he's Michael Caine, basically. He doesn't look or sound *that* much like him, but he belongs to an archetype that Caine helped to define. Look at the glasses and the way he's pointing. He's bald to throw you off the scent, but don't be fooled. Glazer is a Michael Caine tribute act.



🕒 Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days



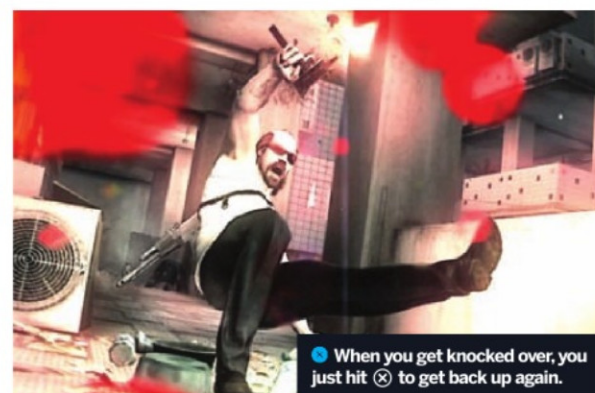
• You think Kane's outfit looks bad now, you should see it later in the game.



• It's always a good idea to try and find a way up onto the rooftops.



• There's a Trophy for killing a certain number of enemies while knocked down.



• When you get knocked over, you just hit (X) to get back up again.



• This is the bit where some of the cars can't be used for cover.

therefore an absolute sucker for a simple flanking manoeuvre every time. And it's a good job too because otherwise you'd sometimes have no other way to get them. Why? Because neither Kane nor Lynch has learned to shoot in the last two years. Killing an enemy who isn't at close range and unprotected is generally a chore thanks to a combination of inaccurate shooting and poor collision detection – just as it was in *Dead Men*. IO might argue that automatic weapons with pinpoint accuracy aren't realistic. True, but automatic weapons that can unload 100+ rounds in the general direction of a human being and not score a single hit aren't either. Not realistic. Not fun.

'Realistic' is not a description that applies to *Kane & Lynch 2* anyway – it's about two men escaping China by fighting their way through an entire army, for a start – but 'real' was very much a keyword throughout its development and that certainly explains its

unique audiovisual style. Where *Dead Men's* strength was in its cinematic presentation, *Dog Days* is in how self-consciously anti-cinematic it is. The whole thing is designed to look, sound and feel like a YouTube video shot on a mobile phone and – while it can occasionally feel like a distraction or an excuse for a lack of technical polish – it does produce a truly unique and sometimes very strong atmosphere. This is easily the best thing about *Kane & Lynch* and the one thing that just about sets it above total mediocrity. It has a tone quite unlike any other game.

Even in the 'real', anti-cinematic department though, the execution is patchy. Kane and Lynch themselves are decent characters with an intriguing dynamic between them, but every other character in the game is just a lazy cliché. Also, the events that unfold through the single-player campaign's too-short duration (four to five hours) are unimaginative, impossible to believe in and come to an

abrupt, anti-climactic end. It has little in the way of replay value given that there are no opportunities to explore off the beaten path or approach scenarios using different methods, so, even taking multiplayer into account, it's an insubstantial package to say the least. It's certainly a worthwhile rental for anyone seeking something a bit different, but as a full-price purchase we expect it'll disappoint. Oh well, here's hoping next time IO Interactive will... ahem... go fix what's broken and make a truly stunning sequel.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

The audiovisual style is truly unique and mostly very effective, but *Dog Days* still has nearly all of the same gameplay flaws as its predecessor and as such doesn't really represent any kind of step forward.

71%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Madden NFL 11

All alone with nothing to play for



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
EA Tiburon
Price
£49.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content,
Sixaxis, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
3
Website
madden.nfl.easports.com

PS3 Much like the *FIFA* series, *Madden* has reached a point now where excellence is expected and surprises are not. The last few *Madden* titles have been pretty much spot on, with last year's being the best of the bunch to date. *Madden NFL 11* doesn't throw the playbook out the window, but it does offer one new and very impactful feature that could make all the difference for the future.

We've talked in the past about how EA loves to brand things (Personality Plus on *FIFA 11*, for example) and in *Madden* it's no different. Gameflow is something that EA is throwing into the mix this year, and while its name may seem meaningless, its effect on the game couldn't be more important. What Gameflow really means is that you give up control of play calling to your coach, rather than picking one yourself with *Madden*'s infamous menu system. That leaves you to just think about getting the job done, much like a quarterback would do in a real game. You can even sync up a headset and have your coach's instructions given to you straight into your ear. It's a neat little idea and it actually speeds up the game significantly.

Gameflow is a simplification of this game that uses authenticity to its advantage

If you're a *Madden* veteran this feature may not be for you, but there are other additions that might grab you. The AFL Legacy mode, which was offered as DLC last time out, is available on the disc this year. This gives you access to classic AFL teams presented in sepia for a retro feel. The only trouble is that it feels a little half-hearted. Sepia-toned games are one thing, but the commentary, replays, crowds and stadiums remain modern. *Madden* has had its issues with licensing older players recently, so perhaps that's an issue. It's good that the AFL gameplay is free this year, but it would be worth more as a new feature if it had more to it, like classic commentary, simpler presentation, old stadiums etc.

Beyond that it may be just us, but the commentary and presentation of the rest



of the game seems slightly more obnoxious than usual. Sponsorship invades much of what goes on in *Madden* – much as it does in the NFL for real – but gravel-toned references to deodorant start to grate pretty quickly. In some ways, Gameflow is a simplification of this game that uses authenticity to its advantage. It would have been better if the rest of *Madden NFL 11* had followed that lead.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Gameflow is an addition that should help demystify *Madden* for newcomers and also offer enjoyment for experienced players. The other new features aren't as classy, but *Madden* continues to build on its excellent recent form.

84%



Win the Super Bowl and this is your reward; a handshake from President Obama.

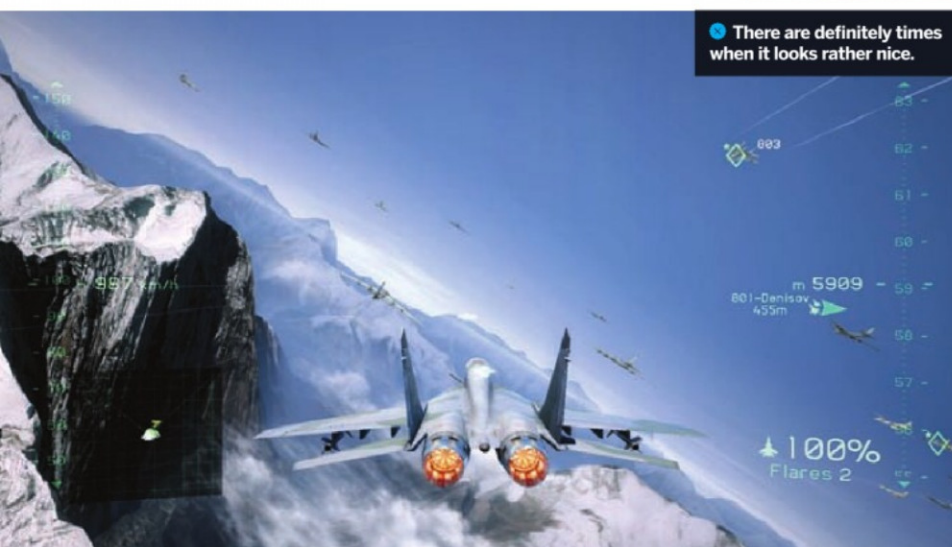


Madden does a fine line in alcoholic NFL fans as well as player likenesses.

In this series



Madden NFL 10 Issue 184
This could be the finest American football game ever made. **82%**



There are definitely times when it looks rather nice.



The obligatory AC130 mission gets a little dull, to be honest.



DETAILS

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Romania
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Flight sim
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.hawxgame.ubi.com

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2

You think you're some kind of hot shot? The top gun?

PS3 The point of taking a genre like the flight sim and sprucing it up, simplifying and making it more accessible should be one that leaves us with a product that sparkles. It should be a game that is bright, full of fanciful situations and lets us fly the most extreme real-world and made-up aircraft available. Basically, what we're saying is: it should be *Ace Combat*.

H.A.W.X. 2 follows almost exactly in the footsteps of its forebear. It's aerial combat, you control fighters and bombers from the real world and you're generally blowing up 'The Middle East' – the country that only exists in videogames.

The game itself is functional if unspectacular. There's a strange sense of peace you can get from it while just cruising

around at 5,000 metres and 1,500km/h, mixed in with the intense action of a pitched battle. The problem is the game doesn't err enough on the side of the latter and is, as such, quite dull. Combat rarely drags itself out of unremarkable territory and even the obligatory canyon mission isn't half as interesting as it should be. The intensity does get ramped up in some situations, but there are times – the attacks on your captured air bases, for example – when things are counterbalanced far too much in the other direction, actually making things much harder than they have any need to be. Seemingly minor issues, like how you are automatically positioned on the game map between some checkpoints,

thus negating your actual position you've put yourself in, can soon lead to frustrations.

There is variety and some interesting elements, but it's nothing you haven't seen before in other games – UAV control, missions based in AC130s, that kind of thing.

The storyline's barely even worth mentioning over the fact that it's so much of a parody of itself it hurts

It smacks more of a 'me too' attitude than anything really notable and does make us wish Ubisoft Romania had just stuck to the aerial combat as exciting as it could be.

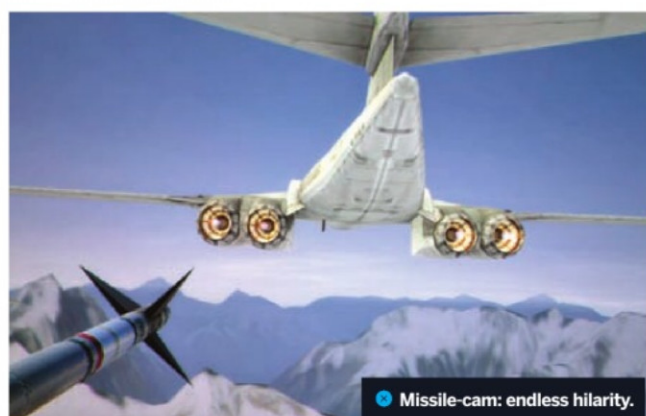
But the main problem with *H.A.W.X. 2* is that it is just tedious. The storyline is by-the-numbers Clancy rubbish, barely even worth mentioning over the fact that it is so much of a parody of itself it hurts. It hasn't moved on in any real way since last year's effort and *Ace Combat* is just a far better game.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It would be daft to claim *H.A.W.X. 2* is a bad game. All the same, it is dull, it doesn't bring anything new to the table and we've seen it done much better elsewhere.

69%



Missile-cam: endless hilarity.



One of the few examples of the game getting exciting.

In this series



Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. Issue 177
Brainless, but brainless and entertaining at the same time. 75%

RELEASE DATE: 3 SEPTEMBER

Valkyria Chronicles II



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
In-house (Sega WOW)
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Turn-based strategy
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer
Age Rating
16
Website
www.sega.co.uk/games/valkyria-chronicles-2

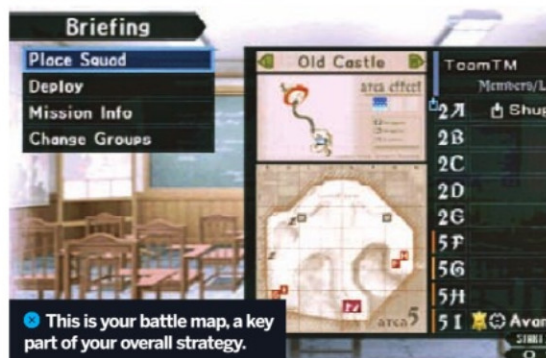
A little less conversation, a little more action please

PSP The sequel to the worryingly addictive *Valkyria Chronicles* has seen a number of subtle changes to the format and one huge one: a transition from console to handheld. Oddly, we don't mind swapping the comfort of the big-screen armchair strategist for the eye-bleeding intensity of manipulating stats on a four-inch screen, probably because of the *Monster Hunter* approach Sega has taken to this portable strategy.

Sega has been wise not to mess with the basic turn-based BLiTZ formula, of course, so you're still in control of a squad that moves in quasi real-time across a map, burning up an action point bar with every step and finishing with a pop at the enemy or some hastily applied medical attention, before switching the turn over to the enemy. But there have been a few strategic layers of detail added, like character classes, which can be upgraded *Final Fantasy*-style to more advanced classes once you've earned enough experience on the battlefield. The scout, for example, can



• Subtitles are also available for the deaf.



• This is your battle map, a key part of your overall strategy.



• Vehicles, like tanks, are powerful and tough, but make big targets.

become a sniper with enough kills under their belt – a very useful support class to a team of front-line soldiers.

Missions are picked up from the briefing room in the same hub that you research new weapons, train your squad, buy kit and acquire new team-mates from. It's called Lanseal Academy and according to the *Valkyria Chronicles II* canon, it's where your entire team learns the art of war. Despite being brought into the Academy for their prodigious

We would have liked to see it on the PS3 but for the price, the PSP version is a bargain

battlefield talents, we still find it odd that a thoroughly green Avan and company should be sent to fight for the Gallian rebels only to return to exchange inane banter in school the next day. And that's the biggest criticism we can muster of this otherwise excellent title, that there's far too much lengthy conversation between archetypal and hormonally challenged Japanese characters, either utterly brainless or with humour that's been completely lost in translation. You can pick these 'events' in any order from the hub but you can't leave them for long, because many are key to acquiring new squad members and other gameplay elements.

Valkyria Chronicles II suits a portable format incredibly well otherwise. The deep and compelling strategy mechanic of the original is complemented by a huge number of optional missions, around 50 hours of story-driven gameplay and with a four-player co-op game possible, a lot of replay value, too. We would have liked to see it on the PS3 but for the price, the PSP version is a bargain.

Ben Biggs

VERDICT

A superb conversion to a portable gaming format. This sequel makes up for the lack of big-screen impact with intense strategy and a co-op mode that adds many hours of replay to an already huge strategy game.

87%

• They're speaking English, but we still don't know what they're on about.



In this series



Valkyria Chronicles Issue 173
Accessible, deep and extremely hard to put down. **84%**



RELEASE DATE: 10 SEPTEMBER



Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep



No I just can't wait to be Kiiiiing...dom Hearts

DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Square Enix
Price
£29.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Role-playing game
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating
12
Website
www.kingdomhearts
bbs.com



Disconcerting is the sight of Mickey Mouse wielding a keyblade, shooting off into the skies with his trademark 'oh hoo!'... noise. Disconcerting is how these seemingly normal three main characters can't seem to be able to discern the bloke voiced by Leonard Nimoy is quite clearly evil. Disconcerting is Donald Duck in general, but that's by the by. But just because there are a few things about *Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep* that leave us ever-so-slightly uncomfortable, that doesn't mean it's a bad game. Far from it, in fact. Acting as a prequel to the main series as begun on PS2 way back when, *Birth By*

Sleep tells the tale of three young warriors on their quest to find the missing Master Xehanort (the aforementioned Nimoy-voiced character). Obviously things aren't as straightforward as you might assume, but we'll avoid any spoilers except to say that: yes, Goofy is in it.

The game itself is a hybrid of classic *Kingdom Hearts* mechanics and a mix of another fine PSP action-RPG, *Crisis Core* – the latter surely coming as a side effect of the new game using the older one's engine. What this amounts to is a small amount of exploration mixed in with a fair amount of combat. But approach this bright, colourful and Disneyfied game with the mind-set it will be a kids' game of 'hammer (X), win' and you will be sorely disappointed. Oh, and you'll lose. Complexity is of a surprising level, with command decks – basically your move, magic and suchlike set – offering improvable skills, changeable loadouts and everything else you would expect from a role-playing game of a serviceable level of depth.

Combat itself mixes things up and strays quite far from simply hammering the attack button, with timing, skill and technique necessary to make any real progress in the game. Or you could just start it at a lower difficulty as – let's not forget – this is an accessible game for those that can't cope with too much pain inflicted by the Unversed.

All in all *Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep* is a very good game. It's been lavished with the care and attention you would expect from a real labour of love, as well as the combined production values you would hope for from a Disney/Square Enix production. Though that goes without saying, as *Kingdom Hearts*



Approach this game with the mind-set it will be a kids game and you'll be sorely disappointed

has always been home to such fantastic production. The story may still be a bit hokey in places and some characters are outright rubbish, but the game is fun to play, fine looking and, well, it has Leonard Nimoy in it.
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Birth By Sleep should appeal across the board with its mixture of Disney and Squenix, by being easy to play yet hard to master and through offering a rich, long-lasting and diverse gaming experience. Two thumbs up, recommended.

88%



Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII Issue 167
Same engine, different game. Also great. 87%

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Sports Champions

A motion-controlled sports game Wii can get behind



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
In-house
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PlayStation Move
Age Rating
12+
Website
<http://bit.ly/aYODiv>

PS3 "Is this just *Wii Sports* on PS3, then?" they all asked. It surprised them all to hear the words, "No, not really," in response. Then they watched us playing. Then they played themselves. Then they understood. *Sports Champions* is actually – whisper it – *pretty good*.

We're not going to run to the rooftops to bellow to the world below about how much we love the game, but it gets enough right for us to offer a recommendation on the game. For

Simple pick-up-and-play sensibilities mixed with a fair amount of challenge and some fine competitive play

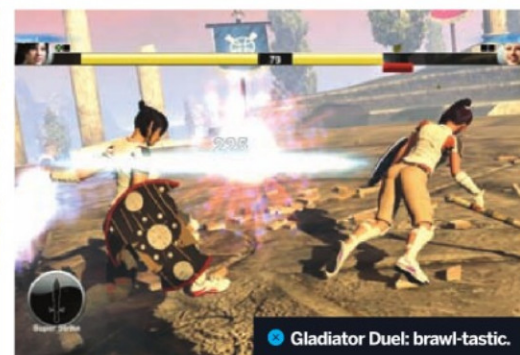
once, it's a tarted-up tech demo that manages to offer fun for players thanks to its precise control scheme.

While there are only six sports on offer, each utilises the Move controller in markedly different ways while at the same time offering something with at least a semblance of depth to it. Table Tennis is really good fun, and having to genuinely swing hard to hammer the ball is

● Volleyball: dull with one controller, good fun with two.



● Archery: get your training in for *SOCOM 4*. Or just enjoy it in its own right.



● Gladiator Duel: brawl-tastic.



● Bocce: more fun than it looks. Really.

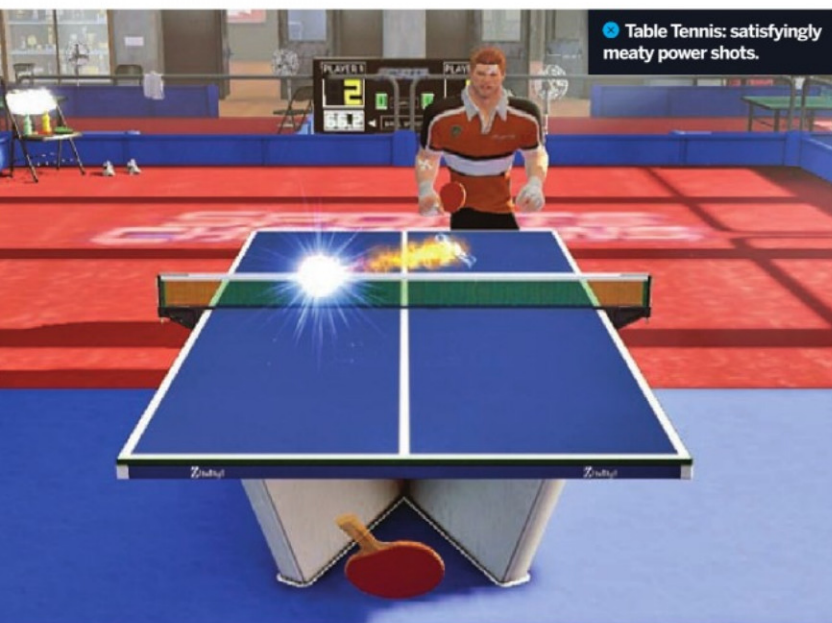
satisfying every time. Bocce is the most sedate of the sports on offer, but this laid-back demeanour hides an exacting nature and

frighteningly competitive edge to the game. Volleyball is rather amusing in that you find yourself acting out full volleyball motions – though hopefully stopping short of actually leaping about your living room. Disc Golf doesn't exactly vie with *Everybody's Golf* for the 'Different Forms Of Golf' trophy, but it's a decent enough distraction. Archery is addictive and, with two Move controllers, very satisfying. In fact, it's solid with one, too. Finally, Gladiator Duel is fantastic for those of you who simply want to brawl – with two controllers it's one of the best things on *Sports Champions*, and, as with other things, surprisingly deep to boot.

As a demonstration of what PlayStation Move is capable of, *Sports Champions* is very proficient. To our surprise, it also works



● Disc Golf: probably better in real life.



● Table Tennis: satisfyingly meaty power shots.

as an actual *game* too – simple pick-up-and-play sensibilities mixed with a fair amount of challenge and some fine competitive play all adds up to an experience we honestly didn't expect to enjoy as much as we did. Though some naysayers might argue that there isn't much to the overall package and that there's nothing here to really keep you coming back time and time again, there's still a lot of fun to be had. It would be extremely harsh to condemn a game that we've actually enjoyed a great deal.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

We may have felt cold towards *Sports Champions* on initially seeing it, but actually playing the game is a minor revelation. Exact, precise controls combine with fun sports to make a game we have no hesitation in recommending to Move adopters.

83%

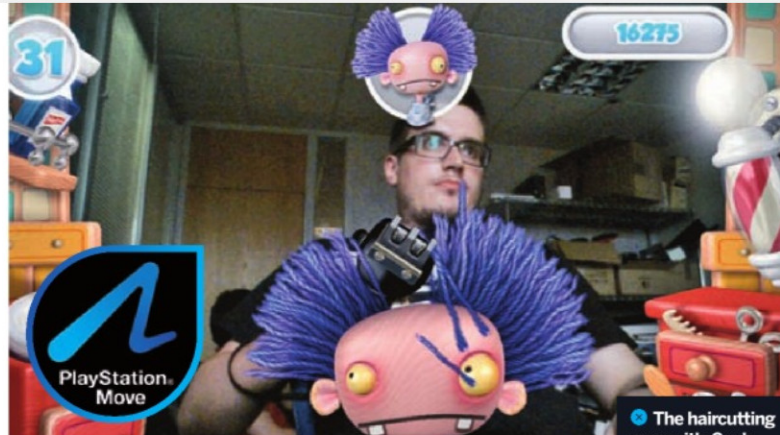


Demon's Souls Issue 193
If you don't like sports and do like hardcore games, that is. 92%



DETAILS

Publisher
Supermassive Games
Developer
Sony Computer Entertainment
Price
£29.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Party
Supports
720p, PlayStation Move
Age Rating
3+
Website
<http://bit.ly/d4WZCt>



RELEASE DATE: 15 SEPTEMBER

Start The Party!

Do we have to? We're tired

PS3 Move is being likened to the Wii's controller left, right and centre – "no!" we scream, "it's different!". Then we realise *Start The Party!* exists and all of our protestations just fade away.

Fret not, though: while Supermassive Games' quirky mishmash of 20-odd party games may look like exactly the kind of thing you would

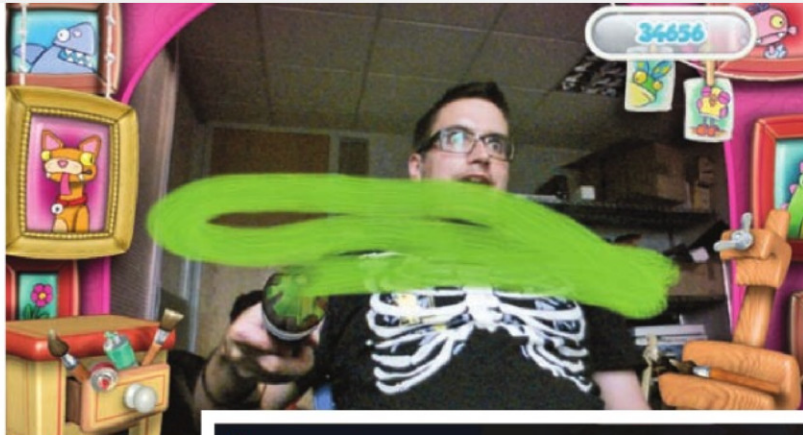
It won't surprise you to hear nobody's world will be set on fire

ignore on Wii, it's actually a solid package. The games range from throwaway (whack a mole) through oddly compelling (wafting parachuting men onto life rafts – to avoid sharks, naturally)

and onto being actually good fun (painting). It won't surprise you to hear nobody's world will be set on fire by *Start The Party!* but take solace in the fact that it really isn't as execrable as you might assume.

The controls are tight, to the point that people remarked on how accurate Move is – which is always a bonus – and the game takes itself so non-seriously that you can't help but raise a smile every now and then. Especially when you graffiti over a friend's portrait.

Start The Party! is a pretty solid entry to the party game genre and a fine successor to the likes of *Eyeto Play*. The inherent faults with the genre – a lack of longevity and no real drive to



The haircutting game: it's Gav's worst nightmare.

Painting: joyous.

This is about as creative as Move usage gets on the game.



play it outside of certain (some might say 'party-like') occasions – still rear their heads, but it's hard to really dislike the game for that. *Start The Party!* is a fun, if light experience.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

As shallow as shallow party games get, yes, but *Start The Party!* hits all the right notes – while it's fun with friends and family, it's just not one you'd bother with alone. Which is rather obvious if we do say so ourselves.

72%



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Japan Studio
Price
£29.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Racing/party
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, PlayStation Move
Age Rating
16+
Website
<http://bit.ly/cNnN17>

RELEASE DATE: 17 SEPTEMBER

Kung Fu Rider

They see me rollin', they hatin'... or something

PS3 The premise is suitably wacky and the presentation evokes *Crazy Taxi*'s arcade sensibilities more than we expected it to. But that doesn't change the fact that – compared to the other two Move games reviewed – *Kung Fu Rider* just doesn't take advantage of the Move controller very well.

When Kung Fu Rider works, it works well and there are flashes of genius

Controls are all handled with a single wand; waggle up and down to speed up, thrust up to

jump, left and right to steer and so on. It's all simple and intuitive, but there's the simple fact that it's both inexact and sometimes pretty unresponsive. When you're trying to escape the Yakuza on an office chair/baby walker/ceremonial drum/whatever else at extremely high speeds you don't want your controls to be letting you down as often as they do here.

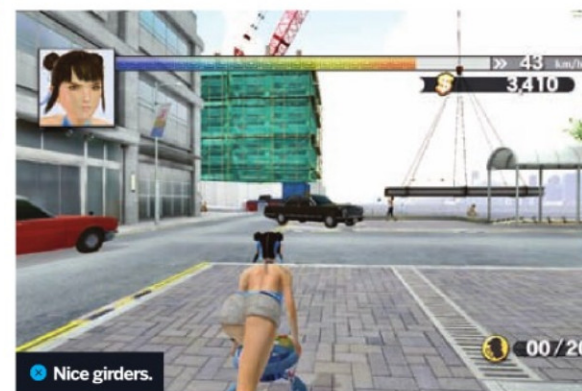
It's not like this all the time, though, and when *Kung Fu Rider* works, it works well. There are flashes of arcade genius that remind you of why this stuff can be so addictive – ramping up



This is what we mean when we say 'wacky'.



This is also what we mean when we say 'wacky'.



your chain gauge by collecting bonuses, tackling enemies and avoiding obstacles is as addictive as you'd want it to be.

But the game lets itself down again through a sheer lack of content. Only a handful of different levels are available to you. While they all offer multiple routes (enough to get lost in, we hasten to add), there just isn't enough to keep you playing beyond an hour or two, which is disappointing to say the least.

Ian Dransfield

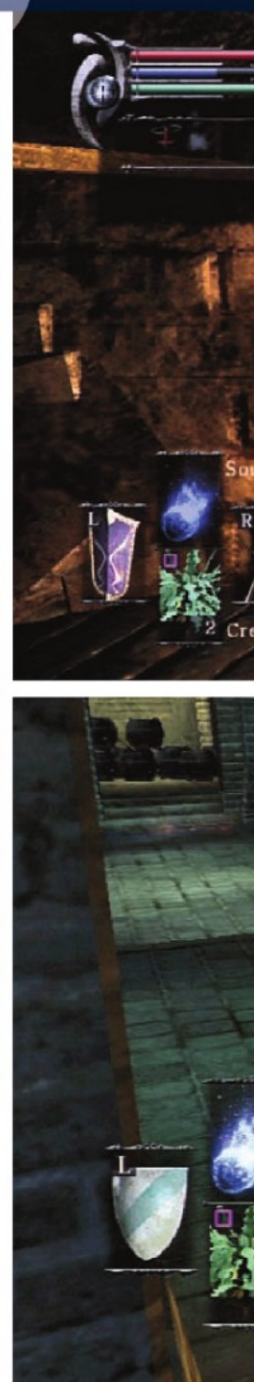
VERDICT

When it doesn't work, you'll absolutely hate it. But when it does work, there's some fun to be had with *Kung Fu Rider*. The problem is, it doesn't last very long before you get bored. Still, it's one for parties, apparently.

65%



Getting others into your game is a fine way to lower the challenge but make sure they don't die.



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
FromSoftware
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£44.99
Players
1-Lots
Genre
Action RPG
Supports
1080p, Sixaxis,
DualShock 3, PSN,
Dolby Digital 5.1

Demon's Souls

Time to live. Time to die. Time to kiss your life goodbye...

Demon's Souls is pretty tough. Designed to test a player's skill and punish them for even the very simplest of mistakes, it's not a game that makes itself accessible to everyone. In many cases, the harsh test is enough to put individuals off entirely. Although it may seem like developer FromSoftware has implemented such a curve for the sake of it, there's actually a meaning behind this supposed madness.

For those connected to the PSN, the online experience is directly tied into the single-player one and is where *Demon's Souls* shows a serious dose of originality. It allows you to see the actions of other players in the same area, both when alive and dead, meaning you can see how they met their demise. It's even possible to leave messages for one another warning of the dangers that lie ahead. Be it a trap, notifying them that a boss is just around the corner

or more open comments, it's a very novel way indeed to make it feel like you're part of a bigger world despite participating in a solo campaign. Furthermore, although it's painfully frustrating, the system can even be abused by those with a more ruthless spirit. There's nothing within *Demon's Souls* to stop you from conning someone else, adding yet another dimension to proceedings. You can be frivolous and believe everything you read, but ensuring you approach every situation with a healthy dose of scepticism creates a sense of tension not many other games can match.

To stretch this idea out a little bit further, FromSoftware has also seen fit to expand its online technology to incorporate co-op play. This increases the host's world to open the door for up to three extra characters in soul form, and you can use this help to get past

a particularly challenging section or level. Just to keep the difficulty where the developer deems necessary, such phantoms can only be summoned for areas where the main boss hasn't been defeated. If any of the players die their spirit is transferred back to its own universe.

Demon's Souls creates a sense of tension not many other games can match

Much like the offline structure, hooking *Demon's Souls* up to the PSN is not instantly gratifying. It requires patience, time and a tremendous amount of skill that may not necessarily appeal to the person who just wants to hack-'n'-slash their way through a dungeon. For anyone who has the endurance, though, what's here is truly unique and surely

online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



To get the most out of *Demon's Souls*, getting connected to the PSN is a must.



Levelling up your character in the right way can completely change how your experience plays out.

a window into what many Western companies will start doing in the future – creating an almost MMO type environment that rewards players for their assistance without ever really leaving the single-player domain is a smart move. Admittedly there's still plenty of room to better it, and this is by no means perfect, but it's undoubtedly impressive. Test *Demon's Souls* water first simply due to how unrelenting it can be, but if it appeals, the longevity here is huge.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

Exceptionally unique and engaging, *Demon's Souls* use of the PlayStation Network is a credit to the FromSoftware team. If the barrier to entry was a little lower this would be one of the finest, and most recommended, titles out there. ★★★★★

THE INTERNAL WAR

Not everyone has your best interest at heart

AS WELL AS a co-op angle *Demon's Souls* also allows you to go head-to-head with others in the game if that suits. Taking the role of the Black Phantom, it's possible to invade someone's world and encourage enemies within it to attack or take on responsibilities yourself. As well as increasing the challenge, you're also, in a way, disrupting their game – not a bad choice if you're seeking to exact revenge on someone. Thankfully there's a limit to how many times such an assault can be pulled off but the level system in place means experiences can vary wildly depending on how you've decided to progress. Although it works, it can also prove to be insanely frustrating. At the same time, it does a wonderful job of keeping the mood fierce.

PSN Roundup

NAUGHTY BEAR

If you go down to the woods to play this, you're an idiot...

Publisher 505 Games Developer A2M Price £49.99 Players 1-4 Genre Action

Naughty Bear is not a good game. Showing you its entire hand within five minutes, its humour wears off incredibly quickly along with all of its ideas. Unsurprisingly the exact same thing can be said of the multiplayer. A2M's structure fails to have any longevity and becomes a horrible bore before the first match is over. A few interesting gimmicks have been applied – such as Golden Ooze, where play is constantly switched from team-based to all out carnage – but it's all so terrible and dull it doesn't matter in the slightest. Things are made worse by modes such as 'Cake Walk', which lack any type of ingenuity or



appeal. We can't imagine anyone playing the single-player and being tempted to go online, but just in case you needed assurance, this review exists as such. **SM** ★★★★★

BACKBREAKER

Unrealised potential rolls over to the PSN

Publisher 505 Games Developer Natural Motion Price £49.99 Players 1-2 Genre Sports

One day, the world will embrace Natural Motion's Euphoria engine and sport games as we know it will evolve. Until then, *Backbreaker* is just a hint at what is possible. Never hitting the highs it possibly could have, it failed to lure the *Madden* faithful away from their yearly addiction. Unfortunately, its online offering can't save the day either. Only giving you the option to get involved in an exhibition or play tackle alley with a friend, it falls down completely due to the crippling lag you can experience. Admittedly this isn't always the case but when it does hit, you may as well quit there and then because the chances



of redemption are zero. It's definitely enjoyable when it all gels, but a lack of choice and the threat of being stopped in your tracks drags this down. **SM** ★★★★★

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

The EA online incentive has arrived

Publisher EA Developer EA Tiburon Price £49.99 Players 1-24 Genre Sports

Let's get the controversial information out of the way first. If you decide to purchase *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11* second hand you will have to spend more money when it comes to taking it online. Do with that as you wish... For those who have already arrived on the PlayStation Network, however, you will be pleased to know that not a lot has changed. Although we would certainly like to see EA do more with its golfing franchise, *Tiger Woods* has so many options it's hard to find fault, especially as this year's iteration allows you to take part in an online Ryder Cup. With solid servers and a community that



still seems to be oddly big, it's highly likely you'll be as pleased as you were last year, as long as you're happy with the lack of changes in the game itself. **SM** ★★★★★



There is a beefy range of weapons on offer and all of them can be handily upgraded.



Alien Breed: Impact GAME

A breed apart from the Xbox Live Arcade release

DETAILS

Publisher
Team 17
Developer
In-House
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£7.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Shoot-'em-up

You have to hand it to Team 17; it certainly knows how to keep its fan base happy. After releasing *Alien Breed: Evolution* in December of last year, the Ossett-based developer put the PSN version on hold so that it could fix the problems fans had with it. The end result is *Alien Breed: Impact*, an extremely slick shooter that plays like a cross between *Dead Space* and the original Amiga games.

The first thing that hits you about *Impact* is just how beautiful it looks. Utilising the Unreal Engine to great effect, the spaceship Leopold that you have to explore is a hulking mass that features superb lighting effects that really drive home the feeling of being stranded on a devastated ship. The same care and attention has been afforded to your hapless engineer and the many aliens that aim to make him lunch. Unlike the Xbox outing there is far more variety to the extraterrestrials and while they're rather generic in design, each and every one is perfectly formed and animated.

New aliens aren't the only additions that *Impact* boasts, as Team 17 delivers a number of subtle nips and tucks that make *Impact* feel like a far more substantial game. The biggest addition is the brand new 'Prologue' mode, which not only serves as an introduction to the 19-year-old franchise but also adds some additional play time to what is admittedly a rather short game.

Easily the biggest improvement, however, is the ability to upgrade your weapons as you explore the huge ship. With virtually the entire crew wiped out by aliens, dead bodies litter the ship and all of them can be looted. One particularly nice touch is that you're defenceless for a few seconds while ransacking bodies, which adds an additional level of excitement as you look out for rogue aliens. The ability to now upgrade adds a certain amount of strategy due to you only being able to enhance each weapon in one

of three available categories: damage, rate of fire and reload speed. Fortunately, you're able to carry a large amount of different weapons with you ranging from a simple pistol to a satisfying to use flamethrower, so it's just a case of working out which upgrade best suits each weapon. Add in the ability to upgrade essential items like healing kits or the strength

An extremely slick shooter that plays like a cross between *Dead Space* and the original Amiga games

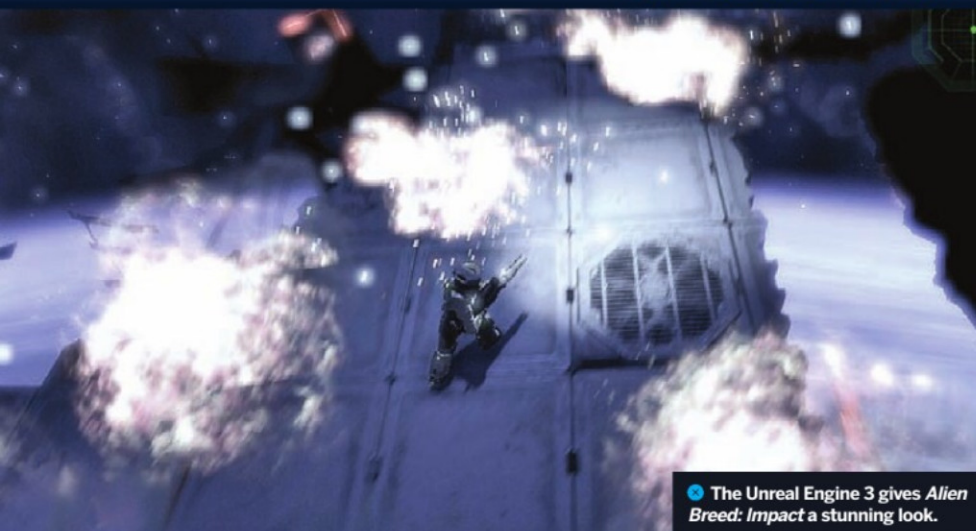
of your melee attack and *Impact* begins to deliver a solid level of strategy among all the blasting that was sorely missing from the original Xbox Live Arcade outing.

Aside from these differences *Impact* is virtually the same as *Evolution*, which means it's a highly enjoyable, if rather repetitive blaster. While the gameplay is simplistic and involves you doing little more than

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Store Roundup



• The Unreal Engine 3 gives *Alien Breed: Impact* a stunning look.



• *Impact* is best enjoyed with a friend, so team up and fry some aliens.

moving from waypoint to waypoint, flicking switches and opening doors, the constant assaults of aliens keeps you on your toes and ensures that the adrenaline always remains high. If you're after a good old-fashioned shooter, *Impact* is one of the best examples on the system. Those wanting a little more substance may be disappointed, though.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

A worthy addition to the PSN roster that improves on the enjoyable Xbox Live Arcade game. It still feels a little simplistic at times, but there's no arguing with its polished gameplay and gorgeous visuals.

80%

DOUBLE TEAM

Fight the xenomorphs with a friend

ONE OF THE best aspects of the original *Alien Breed* was the ability to play with a friend. Unsurprisingly, this mode has been retained for *Impact* and it makes for some great gameplay moments. While it obviously pays to team up against the many xenomorphs that inhabit each level it's also fun to run around and nab all the decent gear while your friend does all the work (not that we'd really condone that sort of thing). In fact the only thing that really ruins the co-op experience is that it can still be quite tough to work out who's who.

EARTHWORM JIM HD GAME

He's 16 years old and still groovy

Publisher Gameloft Developer In-House
Price £7.99 Players 1-4 Genre Platformer

THE ORIGINAL EARTHWORM

Jim was an instant classic thanks to its slick visuals, incredible animation and genuinely amusing gameplay. This faithful update not only features all the barmy gameplay of the 16-bit classic, but also paints it in a beautiful high-def sheen that greatly enhances the already classic design. That's not all though, for Gameloft has created a new multiplayer mode that allows you to play through the game with three other friends. It works incredibly well and helps give the aging game a brand new lease of life as a result. While the controls do feel a little bit spongy in places, this is nevertheless a highly impressive update.



89%

TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND GAME

The return of Guybrush Threepwood

Publisher LucasArts Developer Telltale Games
Price £13.99 Players 1 Genre Adventure

YOU HAVE TO give credit to Telltale Games.

In addition to revitalising the point-and-click adventure, it's also managed to deliver a new *Monkey Island* that is arguably as good as the original PC instalments. This new five-part adventure starts off well but improves with each instalment. Plenty of memorable new characters are introduced, the puzzles get fiendishly clever and it's full of the humour that has become the franchise's trademark. It's also a tremendous looking game that is enhanced by some excellent voice acting. If you've ever had an interest in the genre then this pack is unmissable.



91%

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV: SUPER COMPLETE ALTERNATE COSTUME PACK DLC

Time to bend over...

Publisher Capcom Developer In-House
Price £13.99 Players 1-2 Genre Beat-'em-up

IT'S DIFFICULT TO recommend Capcom's latest DLC. While it's much cheaper than buying



the original five separate packs, the cynic in us can't help but wonder why we should be paying for something that would have been absolutely free on last generation consoles. Of course, if you're an avid *Street Fighter* fan then 14 quid to enhance an already enjoyable online experience is nothing at all, especially when you consider just how good some of the costumes are. Standouts include a Kato outfit for Fei Long, a Mecha Zangief outfit and a camp cowboy outfit for Ken. Certainly expensive but hardcore fans are bound to buy it. ★★★★★

PLANET MINIGOLF GAME

You won't be over the moon with this

Publisher Zen Studios Developer In-House
Price £6.29 Players 1-4 Genre Sports

WE REALLY WANT to enjoy Zen Studios' new game, we really do, but it makes a number



of fundamental errors. The biggest issue here is that the controls are nowhere near as responsive as they need to be. Another problem is that despite a number of control methods, it's ridiculously hard to work out just how hard you should hit the ball. It's a real shame that the core mechanics are so poor, because once it comes together the fun courses and variety of gameplay modes that are on offer make this worth a look. It's just a shame that it suffers from a general lack of polish and some really questionable controls.

58%

ZEN PINBALL MARS TABLE DLC

Boldly going where no pinball has gone before

Publisher Zen Studios Developer In-House
Price £1.39 Players 1 Genre Arcade

ZEN STUDIOS CLEARLY understands downloadable content. *Zen Pinball* was



released over a year and a half ago and we're still getting solid content for it. Its fifth downloadable table features a space theme and is arguably one of the hardest tables yet. Due to the lack of objects in the middle, the gameplay is extremely fast and it can be all too easy to lose your ball. Mars is a difficult table to master and lacks the appeal of recent tables but remains great value for money.

★★★★★

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2 ONSLAUGHT PACK DLC

Go to war with your best mates

Publisher Electronic Arts Developer Digital Illusions
Price £7.99 Players 1-8 Genre Arcade

THERE'S NOTHING WORSE than spending £8 on a piece of DLC only to receive



a 100KB download. Having said that, this new multiplayer mode is quite a lot of fun, allowing you and three friends to take down waves of enemies while capturing targeted flag points. The AI is a little rosey in places, but the sheer number of enemy soldiers and vehicles ensure that *Onslaught* works brilliantly when playing with a group of mates. Only the lack of new maps and the fact you can only play on four existing ones lets it down. ★★★★★

It's called *Kick-Ass*, but it's really Hit-Girl who's the star of the show.



Quite how Vaughn got away with Big Daddy we'll never know.



Kick-Ass

A stunning Blu-ray that really kicks ass

DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD Master
Audio 5.1
Director
Matthew Vaughn
Starring
Aaron Johnson,
Nicolas Cage, Chloe
Moretz

Matthew Vaughn is not afraid to take risks. After pitching his adaptation of Mark Millar and John Romita Jr's hit comic to everyone in Hollywood, no one was interested. Hardly surprising seeing as it features a trained 11-year-old assassin who thinks nothing of dismembering bad guys or throwing about the 'C' word whenever it suits her. Vaughn went ahead and self-financed *Kick-Ass* himself and while the end result has

becomes an internet sensation but falls foul of the local crime lord who mistakes him for two real-life superheroes who have their own personal vendetta against the evil drug boss.

If we have one issue with Vaughn's film it's that it doesn't know quite what it wants to be. One minute it's mocking the whole comic-book genre, the next it becomes shockingly dark, before turning into the very thing it wants to ridicule. And yet Vaughn somehow manages to pull it off thanks to some dazzling set pieces, a sensational soundtrack and mesmerising performances from his young leads.

While both Aaron Johnson and Christopher Mintz-Plasse impress as Kick-Ass and the sneaky Red Mist, it's Chloe Moretz as Hit-Girl who sticks in the memory. Instantly iconic in her purple wig and mini-skirt, she's a revelation who switches with ease between a sweet daddy's girl and an old-beyond-her-years terror who happily dismembers bad guys to the theme tune from *The Banana Splits*. Add in a nutty turn from Nicolas Cage and the end result is a real rollercoaster ride.

Considering the quality of the movie it's somewhat satisfying that the Blu-ray does *Kick-Ass* the justice it deserves. While the transfer is just short of perfection it still manages to discover rich colours and fantastic clarity. Far more impressive is the stunning audio that allows you to feel every cracked bone and gurgling death cry and constantly immerses you in the on-screen action.

Kick-Ass is also full of great features that give a wonderful insight into its inception. Vaughn speaks about the difficulties in getting the film greenlit, there's a look at the film's comic-book origins and a huge making-of that gives you a definitive look at what's bound to become a cult classic.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It's always satisfying when a genuinely good film gets a Blu-ray treatment that does it justice and *Kick-Ass* is no exception. This is a wonderfully silly film that benefits from a great transfer, kick-ass sound and excellent extras. A simply essential Blu-ray.

RATING: ★★★★★

It's satisfying that the Blu-ray does *Kick-Ass* the justice it deserves

its flaws, it remains one of the most satisfying movies to come out of Hollywood for ages.

After pondering why no one has ever considered becoming a real-life superhero, super-dweeb Dave Lizewski purchases a diving suit, adopts the name Kick-Ass and sets off to fight crime. One near fatal stabbing and graphic car crash later and Kick-Ass is reborn thanks to deadened nerve endings and metal plates that enable him to take a beating while defending a stranger on the streets. He soon

Plus all
the latest
hardware
reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Competition

Flash Gordon

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

DIRECTOR: Mike Hodges

STARRING: Sam J Jones, Max von Sydow



FLASH GORDON MAY be a little old, but we still love it. A killer soundtrack by Queen, fantastic one-liners and highly memorable sequences ensure that we've always time for it. The lack of decent extras disappoints, but the transfer is wonderfully sharp. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

The Karate Kid

PRICE: £15.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA

DIRECTOR: John G Avildsen

STARRING: Ralph Macchio, Pat Morita, Elisabeth Shue



FORGET THE REBOOT starring Jackie Chan and lose yourself in this classic. You can see the ending coming a mile off, but it's such a feel-good movie. *The Karate Kid* is a cult classic that gets a new lease of life thanks to a razor-sharp Blu-ray transfer here. Highly recommended. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Hot Tub Time Machine

PRICE: £28.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

Surround

DIRECTOR: Steve Pink

STARRING: John Cusack, Chevy Chase



FANS OF GROSS-OUT comedy will love this. It's all fairly predictable – a bunch of losers attempt to make their lives better after travelling back to the Eighties – but director Steve Pink pulls it all off thanks to charming characters and lots of funny moments. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Memento

PRICE: £22.99

SOUND: PCM 5.1 Surround

DIRECTOR: Christopher Nolan

STARRING: Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano



CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S SUPERB psychological thriller finally arrives in the UK. Far cleverer than his recent hit *Inception*, *Memento's* plot works so well thanks to tight writing and a superb turn from Guy Pearce. Extras are also of a very high standard. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Lost Season 6

PRICE: £19.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital

TrueHD 5.1 Surround

DIRECTORS: Various

STARRING: Evangeline Lilly, Matthew Fox, Josh Holloway



AFTER SIX BAFFLING years *Lost* finally comes to a close. Those expecting lots of answers are going to be disappointed. If, however, you're looking for solid resolutions for its well-written characters then you're in for a treat. A solid end to a great series. **DJ**
RATING: ★★★★★

Generation Kill

PRICE: £39.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

DIRECTOR: Susanna White/

Simon Cellan Jones

STARRING: Alexander Skarsgård, James Ransone, Lee Tergesen



FROM THE TEAM that brought you *The Wire* comes this gripping snapshot of life as a Marine during America's march into Iraq. Bolstered by a stunning HD transfer this is essential viewing for those looking for an insight into the reality of modern warfare. **KH**
RATING: ★★★★★



WIN!

POSSESS THIS!

Five Repo Men bundles and a Blu-ray player up for grabs

IF YOU NEEDED a new ticker but couldn't afford it, would you buy it on tick? Well that's the scenario established by Miguel Sapochnik in *Repo Men*. Set in the near future, artificial organs can be bought on credit, but if you can't afford to keep up the repayments you get a visit from the 'Repo Men', who will (horribly) relieve you of said organ leaving you with little chance of survival. Just like a futuristic NHS really.

Despite all that, if you'd still like to be in with a chance of bringing Law and Whitaker home, simply answer this question:

Jude Law was recently part of another movie partnership, but who did he play?

- Lt Raymond Tango
- Butch Cassidy
- Dr John Watson

If you're not one of the lucky winners this time you can still grab yourself a copy of *Repo Men* on Blu-ray now, courtesy of Universal Pictures Home Entertainment.



Terms And Conditions

To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Repo Men competition' plus your name and address. The closing date for entries is 30 September. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified.

This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request.

From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

HD Reviews TVs and media systems that'll make your home entertainment come to life



Sony KDL19BX200BU

Price: £165 • Screen Resolution: 1,366 x 768
Dimensions: 350mm x 462mm x 182mm

While it only features a 720p screen, this is still a wonderful little TV from Sony. The 19-inch monitor delivers a razor-sharp picture, features a handy USB port and also comes with an all-important HDMI socket. A cracking LCD screen at a very affordable price. ★★★★★



Samsung LE19C450

Price: £162 • Screen Resolution: 1,366 x 768
Dimensions: 348mm x 461.3mm x 180.2mm

Samsung's latest 19-inch wonder is another beauty. Like Sony's model it has built-in Freeview, a superb LCD screen and USB support for music and pictures. It gets an additional thumbs up from us thanks to its three HDMI ports, making this essential for AV enthusiasts. ★★★★★



Panasonic TX-L22X20B

Price: £399.99 • Screen Resolution: 1,366 x 768
Dimensions: 543mm x 363mm x 66mm

Panasonic's new TV is double the price of its peers, but it does have a 22-inch screen and boasts a smooth VIERA image. It only features two HDMI ports, but does have Freeview and VIERA LINK. It's certainly a lot of money, but you're getting quality for the price. ★★★★★

PLAY#x PlayList

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAMES THAT WERE MEANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD



Enter The Matrix

PS2 • 2003

THE WORLD OF gaming is intrinsically linked to that of movies. It has been this way since the beginning of gaming time and even now it doesn't look like things are changing much. It's clichéd to point it out, but it doesn't stop it from being true: generally speaking, movie tie-ins are shoddy.

But at one point in history, we were led to believe this was all going to change. This was going to be down to something that had already changed cinema in the shape of *The Matrix*. Remember the last time you saw an action film without slow motion camera effects panning around characters? It was pre-1999, wasn't it?

And so it was we were led to believe that *Enter The Matrix*, the videogame spin-off of the movies which would add to the story and bring its own storyline to the universe, would change things. We would no

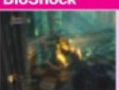


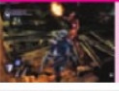
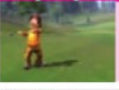
longer see rushed-out movie tie-ins. They wouldn't be cheap, or lazy, or not make sense in the context of the movie they were supporting.

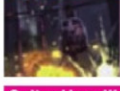
But what happened? What went wrong? It just didn't work out that way, and today we still get dirge shovelled out every time a major movie comes out. *Enter The Matrix*: you changed nothing, you big sod. We'd finish this by riffing on the blue pill motif, but we just don't know what to say.

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
 Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Bayonetta*	187	93%
 The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
 This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
 The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.		
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%

game	issue	score
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
 Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over <i>Sega Rally</i> .		
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
 As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.		
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
 It's just like playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> for the first time all over again, although <i>DJ Hero</i> is slightly more expensive.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
 The most recent <i>Tiger Woods</i> game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because <i>Everybody's Golf</i> is bloody brilliant.		
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
 Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
 The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by <i>PES</i> seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%

game	issue	score
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
 Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
 If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
 Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for <i>GTA IV</i> to play them. What more could you want.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
 <i>Guitar Hero III</i> is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
 <i>World Tour</i> just about manages to trump rival <i>Rock Band</i> with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
 It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
 Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Singularity PS3	80%	The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition PSN	92%
Toy Story 3 PS3	82%	Final Fantasy IX PSN	90%
Naughty Bear PS3	64%	Landit Bandit PSN	66%
3D Collection PS3	75%	Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype PSN	70%
Everybody's Tennis PSP	88%	Catan PSN	85%
DeathSpank PSN	83%		
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition PSN	94%		

game	issue	score
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love <i>LBP</i> you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	151	92%
With the addition of an online multiplayer, <i>MotorStorm</i> gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen.		
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, <i>Pacific Rift</i> amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%

game	issue	score
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar <i>GTA</i> formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
<i>Rock Band</i> could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	179	96%
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for <i>Colin McRae</i> . Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%

game	issue	score
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil <i>Soul Calibur IV</i> . Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Just beating <i>Blur</i> to the chequered flag, <i>Split/Second</i> is a wonderfully intense racing game in the <i>Burnout</i> mould.		
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i> , stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
This unique FPS combines the best bits of <i>Mafia</i> and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements.		
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i> .		
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%

*denotes import review

DNF DID NOT FINISH StarCraft: Ghost

PS2 • 2002



EIGHT YEARS AGO we were surprised – and pleased – to hear a game was to come out on PS2 based on the *StarCraft* series by Blizzard. It would be about an agent named Ghost, and would be a third-person action/stealth shooter.



WE WERE NATURALLY excited by the prospects *Ghost* afforded – it looked pretty, it was from a proven series and came from a developer with a good track record and it was getting the pre-release push all games that are going to sell well need.



BUT... SOMETHING WENT wrong. Beset by delays, the project soon changed hands from Nihilistic Software to Swingin' Ape Studios. But the updates and previews kept on coming and *Ghost* kept on popping up at trade shows.



THEN IT ALL went quiet. After about four years of development – and four years worth of previews in *Play* – *Ghost* vanished from release lists. It was a game we really wanted to play, and it died before we ever got near it.



TECHNICALLY GHOST IS 'indefinitely postponed', and not out-and-out cancelled. As such there's a tiny chance this might pop up again at some point in the future. It won't, but at least we've covered ourselves by saying it *might*.

J'ACCUSE! Syphon Filter series

PSone, PS2, PSP • Sony • 1999 Onwards • Various high%



I'VE HAD YOU in my sights for a long time, Gabe Logan. Your idiotic name has never managed to make me think you're anything other than a moron, masquerading as a super spy in a subpar action espionage thriller. In the immediate aftermath of MGS's release, we saw countless games involving sneaking, government agents, conspiracies and other such copycat rubbish. One of the few games to actually stand out in the gaming press as being 'good' was *Syphon Filter*, and each game in the series has garnered high marks – bar one or two missteps. But I never understood why: they're formulaic, bland and have no sense of humour. The controls have always been a bit off and the series has often relied on



gimmicks to give the illusion it's innovating. Shooting the gun out of that person's hand? A distraction from the fact the rest of the level was a chugging, corridor slog through bland enemies. It's an over-reliance on pointless little gimmicks that irritate me so much.

As for the PSP versions that came out later, well – I was given whole new issues to take... issue with. Did anyone making it actually bother to test the controls? Or did whoever was testing it just have hands crafted by God himself, able to use any confusing, dodgy scheme? Face buttons acting as a second analogue stick may be a necessity for a handheld sporting no actual second stick, but why not just think of a different way to do things? And I haven't even got started on the pointless PS2 conversions of said PSP games. Terrible.

By Solid Sna...re Drum

game	issue	score
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
<i>Undisputed</i> is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
<i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4*	193	75%

PS STORE LISTING		
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%

game	issue	score
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i>. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
It doesn't have MW2's polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Catan	195	85%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
<i>Droplitz</i> is a superb puzzler that blends Rez-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flock!	179	70%

game	issue	score
flOw	151	90%
Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. <i>flOw</i> is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.		
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	195	94%
The HD remake of arguably the best game in the <i>Monkey Island</i> series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN.		
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		

game	issue	score
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the <i>PixelJunk</i> series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its <i>PixelJunk</i> series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Savage Moon	175	87%
Section 8	193	78%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%

game	issue	score
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason <i>Worms</i> is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
Pinball Fantasies was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vampire	186	67%

PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, <i>Legends</i> is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%

REMAKES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

GTA III HD

Rockstar • 2001



SONY'S RELEASE OF the *God Of War Collection* before *God Of War III* came out was viewed by most as a great thing. This was followed up by the announcement of the *Sly Cooper Collection* at this year's E3, along with countless rumours across the internet of an *Ico/Shadow Of The Colossus* HD remake on the way, too. Basically, it's something Sony wants to pursue.



BUT WHAT ABOUT other publishers, away from first-party releases? What about, say, Rockstar and a certain Game That Changed It All? Everyone would buy a spangly new HD release of *Grand Theft Auto III*, right? So it is that we officially put in our request to see the game remade and re-released on PS3 – maybe even via PSN.



THE GAME ITSELF wouldn't need to be changed much, if at all, to keep it up to a wonderful standard – such is the staying power of the title. Maybe a couple of things here and there: the ability to swim, or the addition of motorbikes for example. But generally speaking all we would want is a bit of spit and polish.

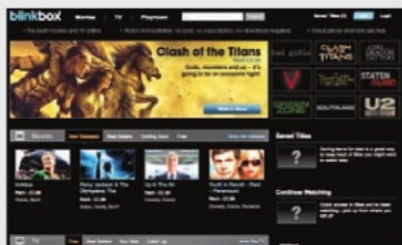


THIS ISN'T JUST limited to *GTA III*, we just picked that as it was the one that set the wheels in motion. *Vice City* would probably get the popular vote, and *San Andreas* would be just as good – if not better. So come on Rockstar – we've spoken and the hypothetical people in our minds have spoken: bring the 'PS2 *GTA Trilogy*' to PS3 in HD.

On The Radar Things that have grabbed our attention this month...

Blinkbox

While we love the PSN and all the good stuff it holds, sometimes it's nice to have some fresh options, and that's what Blinkbox.com offers. Blinkbox is a mix of free, rental or full-purchase video content from new movie releases to classic TV shows – choose from various SD and HD options and enjoy either a full-length series or a quick movie fix. It's optimised for the PS3 browser and also plays host to trailers, games and competitions. Well worth a look. **Go to www.blinkbox.com for more**



Play The Gamer

Do you like games? Do you like going to the pub? Wish there was a way to combine the two? Well, we think we've found it. Play The Gamer is the UK's first live console gaming league where players can compete to win serious cash. The best part is most of these showdowns are held at your local boozer. So, if you think you're the best at *FIFA 10* or *Modern Warfare 2* jump online and see where your nearest event is taking place. **Go to www.playthegamer.com for more**

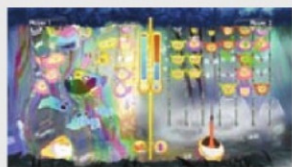


*denotes import review

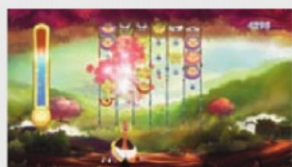
PSN'S HIDDEN GEMS

Critter Crunch

£4.49 • 2009



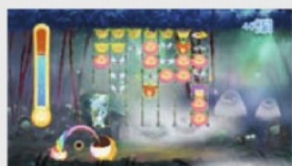
A GOOD-LOOKING GAME, scoring high across the board, simple enough for everyone with enough going for it to keep the more committed playing, a great sense of humour, a low price... so why the hell haven't you bought *Critter Crunch*?



WE DESCRIBED IT as "one of the best games on PSN" and gave it 91%, and its addictive puzzle action still has us hooked months down the line. All we can think is it's lost in a sea of mediocre puzzle games.



FORTUNATELY FOR things lost on PSN, there is a search function. So next time you're on the shop, why not look for *Critter Crunch*? You absolutely will not be let down – this much we can guarantee with hand on heart.



IT'S A COMMON complaint that games are too expensive – especially in the world of digital content where we half expect everything to be free. But *Critter Crunch* is cheap to the point we wonder if it might be too cheap.



BUT IT WOULD be ridiculous to complain about such a thing. The fact of the matter is *Critter Crunch* is one of the best games out on PSN, and is one that people just seem to pass over. Buy it.

game	issue	score
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, GTA: Chinatown Wars has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
Successfully taking the GTA formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Improving on its predecessor, the only way Vice City Stories could be topped is if San Andreas comes to the PSP.		
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		
LocoRoco	143	94%
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%

game	issue	score
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our Metal Slug and the Anthology is a great compilation.		
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
More card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.		
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
A fantastic entry in the Metal Gear Solid series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
A proper Metal Gear Solid game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.		
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.		
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, Ridge Racer still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.		

game	issue	score
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
In the absence of a 'real' MGS game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job.		
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, Tekken 6 is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord! 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld WipEout game could be, Pure is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

PLAY

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Gaming For Over A Decade

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TOM CLANCY'S ADVANCED ACRONYM DECIPHERER



Before you get your hands on any military hardware, your first task on any mission in any Tom Clancy game is to get your head around what all the acronyms mean. That's why in this exclusive demo of Tom Clancy's Next Tom Clancy Game From The Tom Clancy Brand, we've provided you with a synopsis full of acronyms, along with a few clues as to what those acronyms might stand for. Your mission, should you actually be that bored, is to figure each acronym out. See the bottom of the page for upside-down answers.

The year is 2027, you are Ryan Jackson, a POO belonging to the ARSE division of US ultra secret special forces. You have been selected for inclusion on a TIT by TTTIES after intelligence services uncovered a major threat to global security, forcing the president to declare a state of LUST.

DUNG, an Afghan ultra nationalist DUMP so ultra nationalist that it considers itself guardian of the principles that defined Afghanistan before it was even called Afghanistan, is thought to have obtained plans and data files that would enable it to produce its very own PIMMS, a long distance weapon system capable of penetrating all-known anti-missile defence grids and making an entire country burst into flames with just one strike. DUNG was formed after a number of powerful military warlords joined forces and is believed to be highly dangerous.

With 15 years service in elite assault peacekeeping recon operations under your belt, you were first choice when the service in charge of executing insurgent Taliban terrorists internationally needed a team for this tactical infiltration. With all United States territory now locked down, the fate of freedom itself now rests on your shoulders.

You'll be embedded with a TURD unit in enemy territory and will literally be sent underground into the tunnel complexes beneath the Tora Bora mountains, with your only support a CRAP vigilantly patrolling the mountainsides, ready to provide aid where necessary. Be aware POO Jackson, this is a dangerous covert raid - many FARTs stand in your way. These Afghan troopers' fundamentalist beliefs make them fierce resistors.

Only with skill, planning and sheer gritty determination can you restore world peace and survive the gauntlet that is Tom Clancy's Next Tom Clancy Game From The Tom Clancy Brand.

ANSWERS	
POO	= Peacekeeping Operations
ARSE	= Assault Recon Service Elite
TIT	= Tactical Infiltration Team
TTTIES	= The International Taliban Terrorist Insurgent Execution Service
LUST	= Lockdown of all United States Territory
DUNG	= Durani Ultra Nationalist Guard
DUMP	= Dangerous Unified Military Power
TURD	= Territorial Underground Reserve Detachment
CRAP	= Covert Raid Aid Patrol
PIMMS	= Penetrative Incendiary Missile Munitions System
FART	= Fundamentalist Afghan Resistance Trooper

PlayStation 3 PSN PSP 演劇端末

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PLAY



TM

ISSUE NO **196**
THE MIGHTY MECH MAGAZINE

The UK's bestselling indie



review

Mafia II

Fun for all the family?

PS3 EXCLUSIVE

FRONT MISSION EVOLVED

We go hands-on to discover the joy of mechs

review

KANE & LYNCH 2

Square's boys are back but is it a golden age or just Dog Days?

verdict

PLAYSTATION MOVE

Sony's new motion controller and launch games reviewed

preview

THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

Hands-on with the Star Wars sequel and new characters revealed

exclusive

Call Of Duty

Multiplayer hands-on!



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Our verdict on the
PlayStation Move

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FRONT MISSION EVOLVED

The evolution of mech combat on PS3

PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



IF YOU BUILD IT...

It's like Meccano, but with more violence

Build the best wanzor you can – it's in your best interests.

This is the part where it gets *really* interesting. Do you want a machine gun or shotty? A sniper rifle? A knuckle duster the size of a bus? The choice is yours.

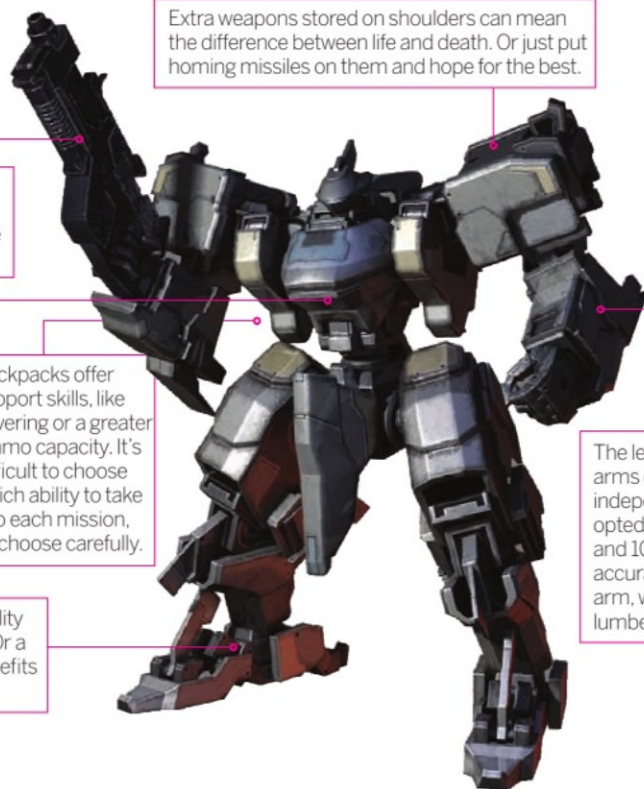
The core part of your wanzor provides your main power source as well as armour. The more power it has, the better parts you can fit, and the more armour you have, the less likely you are to die.

Do you want a bipedal wanzor? The stability and additional armour of a four-legger? Or a hover base? Each choice has its own benefits and drawbacks so it's a tough choice.

Extra weapons stored on shoulders can mean the difference between life and death. Or just put homing missiles on them and hope for the best.

Backpacks offer support skills, like hovering or a greater ammo capacity. It's difficult to choose which ability to take into each mission, so choose carefully.

The left and right arms can be equipped independently – we opted for a light, quick and 100 per cent accurate gun-holding arm, with a powerful, lumbering melee arm.



● This isn't as mismatched as you might think.



● This guy's shield is rubbish, unlike the earlier robo-chap's.



● Shooting down troop transports can become a minor obsession.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Front Mission Evolved

Evolving a new take on a once-strategic world



PS3

We sometimes take issue with how developers are unwilling to take risks; how we are fed games of the same general type, the same genres, over and over again. On one hand we want to thank Double Helix Games for its approach to the *Front Mission* series – transposing it from a strategic, turn-based combat game into the world of third-person shooters is quite a daring move. This is a series with devoted fans and any move to change a formula established since 1995 is going to be met with some opposition. For this, we congratulate Double Helix. But the fact this major change is taking a series from its interesting and intelligent roots and placing it smack-bang in the middle of one of the most over-subscribed genres out there makes it dangerous.

It's understandable why the decision has been made, however. *Front Mission Evolved* will be only the second game in the series released in Europe and only the fourth released in the States. As such, the previous titles haven't been able to forge as strong a following as they have back in Japan, and the series hasn't ever gained a strong enough footing to be known as a strategic, turn-based game first and foremost. Gamers who *know* their games are likely to hold onto this association, but the majority of people are coming in with a clean slate – so it makes perfect sense to spin-off the franchise into territory more popular with Western gamers.

Those familiar with the *Front Mission* series may be initially taken aback by

the change in genre, but those who have any experience with gaming whatsoever will be right at home. Third-person combat; the standard left stick/right stick movement set-up; shoulder buttons to *annihilate* – it's immediately familiar. Missions come thick and fast, pushed on by the backing story and taking you, the player, to numerous locales around the world. It all begins in New York City, as an early example, where you – playing engineer Dylan Ramsey – are reacting to a surprise attack launched by an unknown enemy. Battling through the enemy wanzers, tanks, gun emplacements and – hilariously – troops on foot, you have to try and figure out what's going on and rescue your father, seemingly trapped in the city as he is. The formula from what we've played of the game so far doesn't deviate a huge amount apart from when it comes to the on-foot missions. Yes, that's right – on-foot. In a game based around giant stompy robots of death there are more standard sections where you simply control Ramsey on missions. It mixes things up, at the very least.

Speaking of mixing things up, wazer customisation allows you to really make the mecha your own and lets players experiment a fair amount (see boxout for more). It also brings a level of strategy you wouldn't find otherwise.

Even though *FME* is a re-imagining of the series aimed at snagging itself a brand new playing audience, it still retains the deep storylines of the past games and continues a tale woven

by games not even released on these shores. As such, newcomers are likely to find themselves a little lost by everything that's going on. But don't worry – pay attention and everything will soon become apparent, even if you will constantly feel overwhelmed by acronyms. For the benefit of those who can't be bothered to pay attention, though: some bad stuff is happening, things are on the brink of war, you play as a civilian engineer caught up in all of it in his experimental wazer as it helps one side (or two sides, or is it three sides – twists and turns abound...) fight a battle against an unknown enemy. It's another area that raises a smile, as it's clear Double Helix is paying close attention to the stories woven by past *Front Mission* games.

It will be interesting to see how well *Front Mission Evolved* is received. There is a die-hard element to the fan base in Europe and the US – understandable as it's so much effort to play (and understand) most games in the series. Obviously it's this lot that will prove difficult to please, and Double Helix has its work cut out. But at the same time, the mixture of robo-combat, customisation and interesting storyline could make it the perfect game for newcomers, as well as converting a few of the old guard to this new cause. We can't call it right now, but we're hopeful for the future – stompy robots are brilliant, after all.

Front Mission Evolved is being developed by Double Helix Games. Check out www.frontmissionevolved.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Anything with giant stompy robots in makes us very happy.
- The continuation of a long-running series is often a good thing.
- A new angle on the *Front Mission* series might broaden its appeal.
- The customisation options are fairly robust and pretty enjoyable.

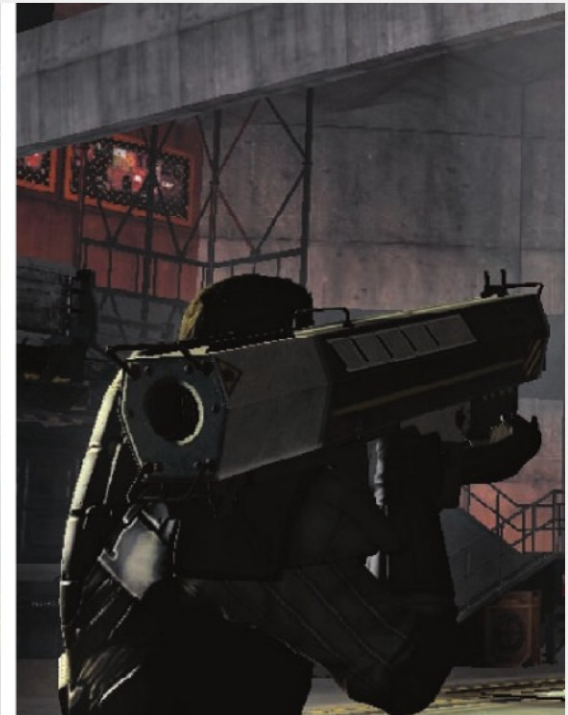
READ ME

The *Front Mission* series has been going since 1995, but just skip forward a few pages to get a better idea of the history.

PREVIEW



Robo-shields can be very useful in the right hands.



She says "edge" here, not EE, DEE, GEE, EE.



Man on a Mission

We talk to FME's Jeremy Lee, development director, and David Verfaillie, design director

What lessons were learned from the development of *G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra*?

Jeremy Lee: That's a tough question – not because we didn't learn any lessons – but because the development was so different. It was a different development team, with a different publisher, and a different goal. However, as a studio, we learned that our reputation with consumers is on the line with every game we make, even if we can't control all the variables

the team was *Call Of Duty*. We were really inspired by the multiplayer aspects of *COD* and wanted to provide a similar experience with the addition of wanzer customisation to *Front Mission* fans.

Is the story shaped around the game or is it vice versa? How important do you see the story in *FM: Evolved*?

DV: The story is a very important element of *Front Mission Evolved*. One of the things that separates *Front*

the level design was shaped around the story.

What's your preferred wanzer setup? Big, lumbering and slow or fast, agile but weak? Or something else entirely?

DV: My favorite wanzer setup depends on the game type in multiplayer or the level in the campaign. I like to tailor my wanzer to the specific challenges that I will be facing. But in general I prefer fast, agile wanzers.

Who is in charge of the mech designs for *FME*?

DV: Some of the wanzer designs were headed up by Skan Srisuwan who worked at a studio in Singapore called Imaginary Friends. Skan is a great artist and was really able to capture the spirit of the wanzers while giving them a new, modern look. The boss characters and some of the new wanzers were designed in house at Double Helix by Matt Olson (lead artist) and his team.

Why do you think mech games don't enjoy as much popularity in the West as they do back in Japan and the East?

JL: I think we have a different relationship with technology. In general, I think us Westerners like to extract ourselves out from the man-machine connection that is part of many mech games and stories. We don't often associate our machines, particularly war machines like tanks, as having a connection to our humanity, so humanised mechs like *Gundam* feel foreign to many Westerners.

As mecha games aren't as popular over here, do you think Western companies can do games featuring giant stompy robots justice?

JL: Absolutely. I think cultural exchange is key in creating new game experiences. If something isn't popular, it doesn't mean we can't understand it... Because the development between Double Helix and Square Enix was so collaborative, we got to create a game

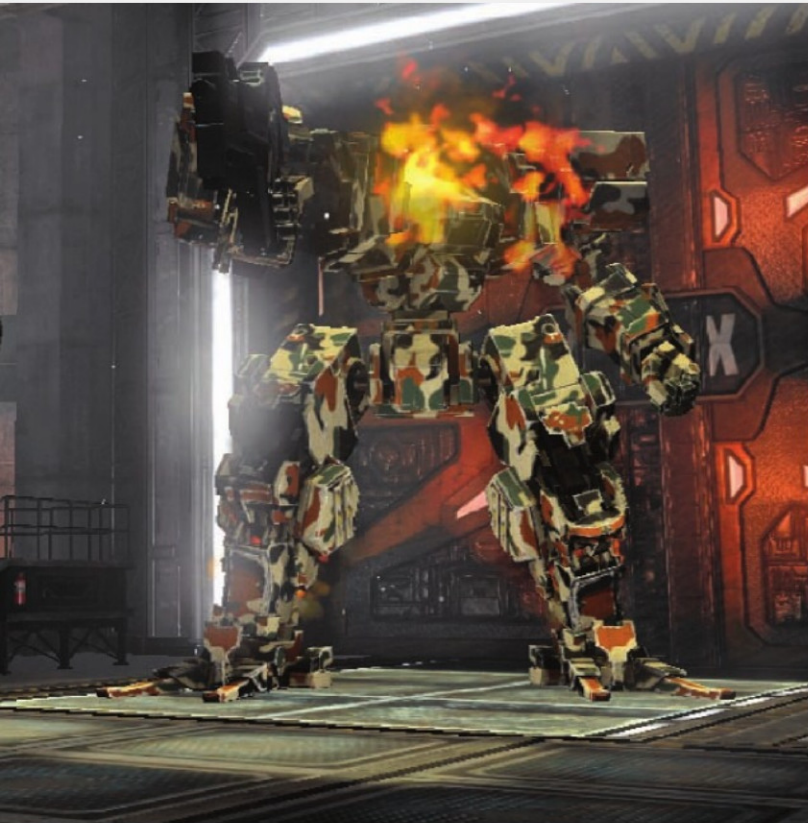
I think cultural exchange is key in creating new game experiences... We got to create something new – Jeremy Lee

such as release dates, which consoles, creative decisions on the movie, etc.

What were your inspirations?

David Verfaillie: Many of the wanzers, weapons and settings in *Front Mission Evolved* are shaped by the previous games. Another game that influenced

Mission from other mech games is that *Front Mission* tells the story of the pilots inside the wanzer. This is so important to *Front Mission Evolved* that we actually designed some levels to be played on foot outside of your wanzer, just so you could really connect with the pilots. Much of



● The factions from previous entries to the series all make a return.



BY FANS, FOR FANS?

Have the folks at Double Helix even played FM?

Play: Were the team fans of the *Front Mission* series?

DV: For the most part yes! Most people on the team have played at least one previous version of FM. *Front Mission 2* and *4* are the most popular games on the team.



experience that isn't Japanese or American – it's something new.

How did the 'Evolved' part of the title come about? Could you explain in what way the game is 'evolved'?

JL: The 'Evolved' in the title came from watching the opening FMV of *Front Mission 4*. We wanted to take that action and evolve our storytelling, play mechanics, and visuals to allow players to experience that level of excitement.

Is it difficult to strike a balance between keeping old fans happy and bringing new fans into the fold?

JL: It's always difficult. The fans are the most vocal group and they want new experiences in games just like everybody else, but are often skeptical of change. But we didn't go into this thinking it would be easy – we knew we had a challenge on our hands. There's room for more than one kind of game in a franchise that's as rich as something like *Front Mission* – we can have action and strategy in the same world.



● From this distance you won't be able to disable individual limbs very successfully.

PREVIEW



A brief history of everything

How Front Mission evolved

Front Mission

FORMATS Super Famicom, PSone, WonderSwan Color, Nintendo DS, mobile phones • **RELEASED** 1995 (original), 2003 (PlayStation)

The first game of the series introduced Japan (and in 2007, on DS, America) to the world of wanzers, turn-based strategy, and the story of the Oceanic Community Union (OCU) and the United States Of The New Continent (USN). The PlayStation version, which came with an extra scenario over the original and a few other enhancements, was never released outside of Japan. In fact, the only way to play the original in English is to pick it up on DS – which, being loyal to PlayStation as we are, we could never recommend – or the less-than-legal method of Super Famicom ROMs and translation patches. But we're not getting into that.

Front Mission 2/Second

FORMAT PSone • **RELEASED** 1997

The second game has never made it out of Japan in any official capacity. Why? According to Koichiro Sakamoto, producer on the series, the second game contained some "faux pas" that wouldn't pass muster in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, the second game continued the core *FM* experience, continuing the story of the OCU. A few changes were made to the mechanics of the game – Action Points were added – but generally it was much the same as before.

Front Mission Alternative

FORMAT PSone • **RELEASED** 1997

Front Mission Alternative was the first game in the series to go in a different direction, taking the action from turn-based strategy into the world of real-time strategy. This meant, unsurprisingly, the game involved thinking on your feet and less of

the careful planning the series had become known for. *Alternative* actually looked really good for the time, though unsurprisingly it hasn't aged too well – both in looks and in how it plays. A fan translation is currently underway as there was never a release outside of Japan. There's been no word on when it will be finished, and to be honest it probably won't be for a while.

Front Mission 3

FORMAT PSone • **RELEASED** 1999 (Japan), 2000 (Europe/US)

After straying from the formula with *FM Alternative*, *Front Mission 3* reverted to type, introducing few new elements but a new storyline – and a new faction in the shape of the People's Republic of Da Han Zhong (DHZ). What was most interesting about this version, however, was the fact it was the first in the series to be released outside of Japan and – before *FM Evolved* – is the only game in the series ever to have been released in Europe. It's safe to say it was well received, as we awarded the game 84% in **Play #62**, as well as naming *FM3* in our list of the top 100 PSone games.

Front Mission 4

FORMAT PS2 • **RELEASED** 2003 (Japan), 2004 (US)

The second title (in a row!) to be released in the US and first in the series to come to the PS2, *Front Mission 4* also managed to be served a delicious slice of **Play** opinion pie, as we awarded it 82% in **Play #119**. Again there were numerous changes to the formula – more units in a battle, non-offensive actions, new weapons/backpacks and lots of other bits and bobs. Generally speaking, though, *FM4* kept things in the familiar territory of strategic turn-based combat with an intriguing backing story covering the events

immediately following the original *Front Mission*. It also still had wanzers, and we still weren't laughing at what they were called.

Front Mission 5: Scars Of The War

FORMAT PS2 • **RELEASED** 2005

And lo it came that *Front Mission 5* was only released in Japan, even though the last two games had made it to us English-speakers. One reason we would guess as to why *FM5* never came out beyond Japan's borders was the fact the story covered events from all other *Front Mission* titles, involving all factions (including the European Commonwealth, and the People's Republic of Zafra). As not all of these were released around the world, it would be a very difficult game for most Westerners to understand. Regardless, it was strategic and turn-based once more, and added greater depth to the decision-making behind creating, customising and advancing the skills of your wazner. *Snigger*

Front Mission 2089

FORMATS Mobile phone, Nintendo DS • **RELEASED** 2005 (mobile), 2008 (DS)

Originally only for mobile phones, *Front Mission 2089* was given the subtitle of *Border Of Madness* and ported to Nintendo's DS handheld in 2008. Even so, it remained yet another game in the series that didn't leave Japan, making it hard for us to understand what's going on. What it is easy to understand is that – quite obviously – the formula remained the same as in previous iterations, bringing more of the 'strategic, turn-based combat' that the series has developed such a reputation for over the years. It would have been nice to see this version on PSP.

Check out www.frontmission.info for more about fan translation projects.

BackAttack

● *Front Mission 2089*. The newest game, yet looks the oldest.



● *Front Mission Alternative*: Big 'uns.





THE SPIN-OFFS

This is where *Front Mission Evolved* fits in, but it's not the only one. The series has also seen these two:



Front Mission: Gun Hazard

FORMAT Super Famicom
• RELEASED 1996

This spin-off from the main series transposed the style of play from strategic, turn-based combat to side-scrolling run-and-gun... fun. This is the series' only foray into this particular genre and was received quite well at the time.



Front Mission Online

FORMATS PlayStation 2, PC
• RELEASED 2005

This entry to the series was, as you may have gathered, an online title. It was also effectively a dry-run for *Front Mission Evolved*, taking the series into the realms of third-person shooters for the first time as it did.



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